

A
FLEETWAY
LIBRARY

WAR
PICTURE
LIBRARY

NO 44

1/-

RAVEN OVER BERLIN



*You can follow the adventures
of the mightiest
of all footballers*

ROY OF THE ROVERS



*Fight the savage enemy
with the tough*

**SPIKE NORTH
DUSTY MINTON
and COMMANDO ONE**



*Or roam across
the Wild West with*

**HAWAKA and
BUFFALO BILL**



All in the greatest of all weekly papers

TIGER

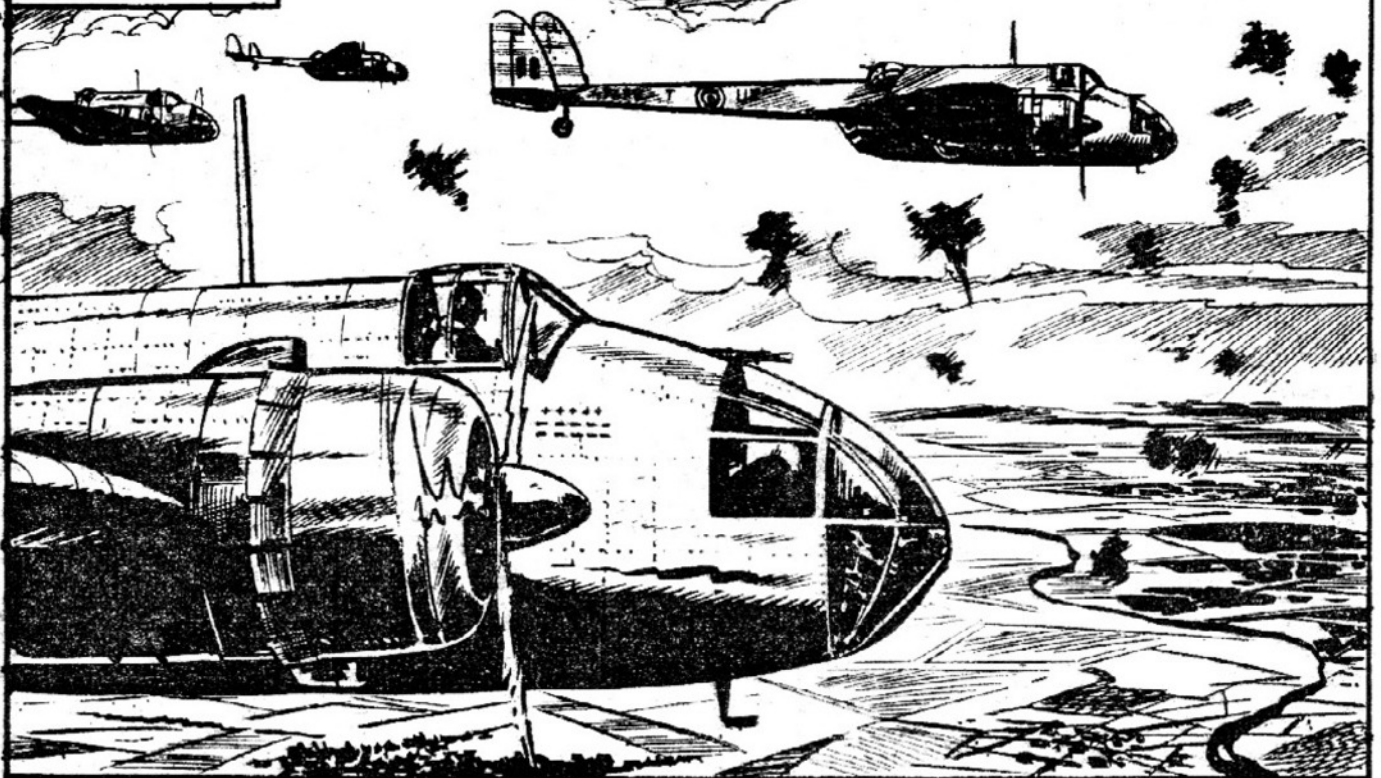
ONE OF
THE
FAMOUS
FIVE STAR
WEEKLIES

ON SALE EVERY TUESDAY 4½d.

Raven Over Berlin

3

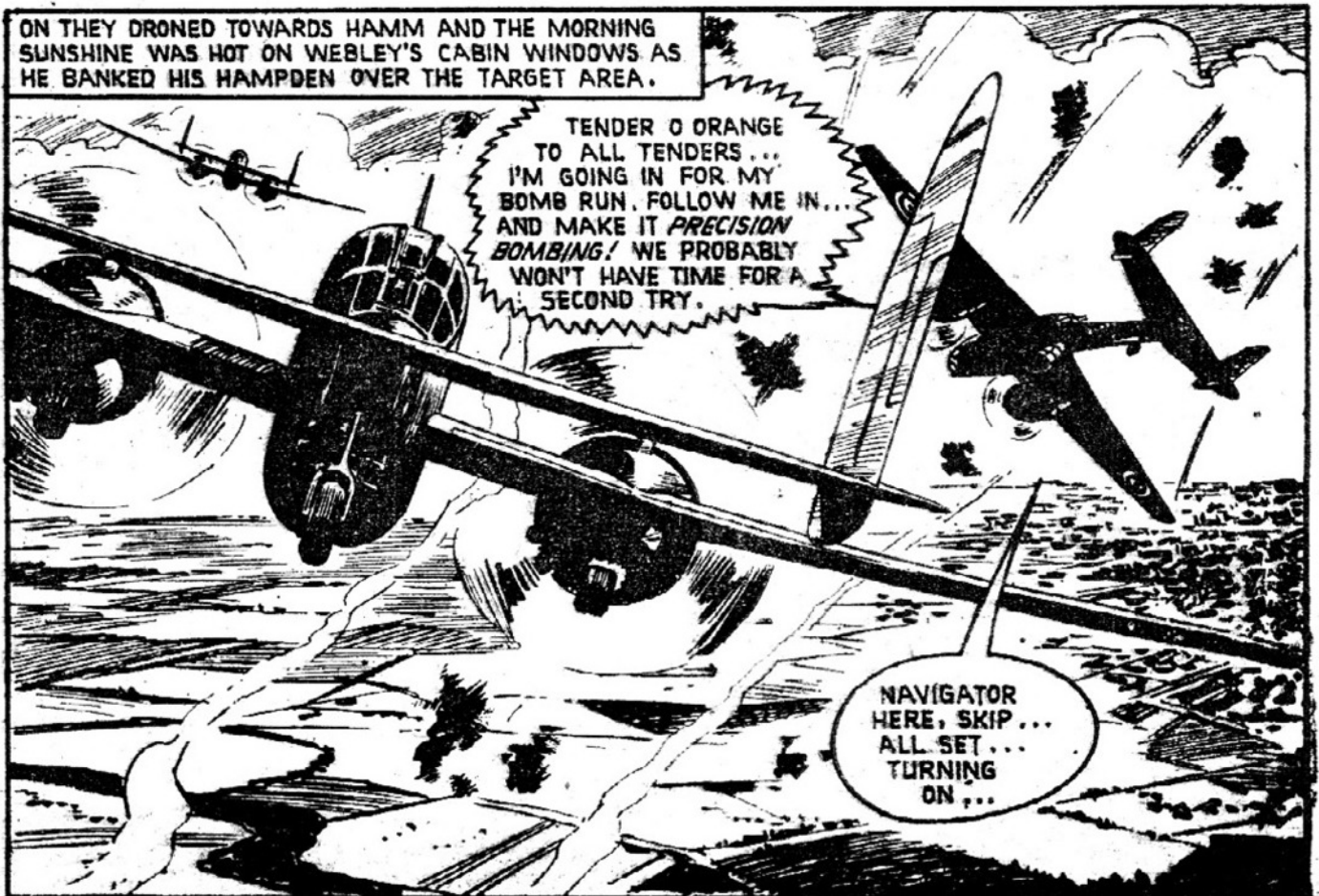
AT THEIR OPERATIONAL CEILING OF 12000 FEET, THE THREATENING CLOUD-BANKS FELL GRADUALLY BEHIND... AND IN AN HOUR THE ZUIDER ZEE WAS BENEATH THEM, AND THE FIRST PUFFS OF FLAK DRIFTED PAST AS THE GERMAN DEFENCES FELT FOR THEIR HEIGHT...



ON THEY DRONED TOWARDS HAMM AND THE MORNING SUNSHINE WAS HOT ON WEBLEY'S CABIN WINDOWS AS HE BANKED HIS HAMPDEN OVER THE TARGET AREA.

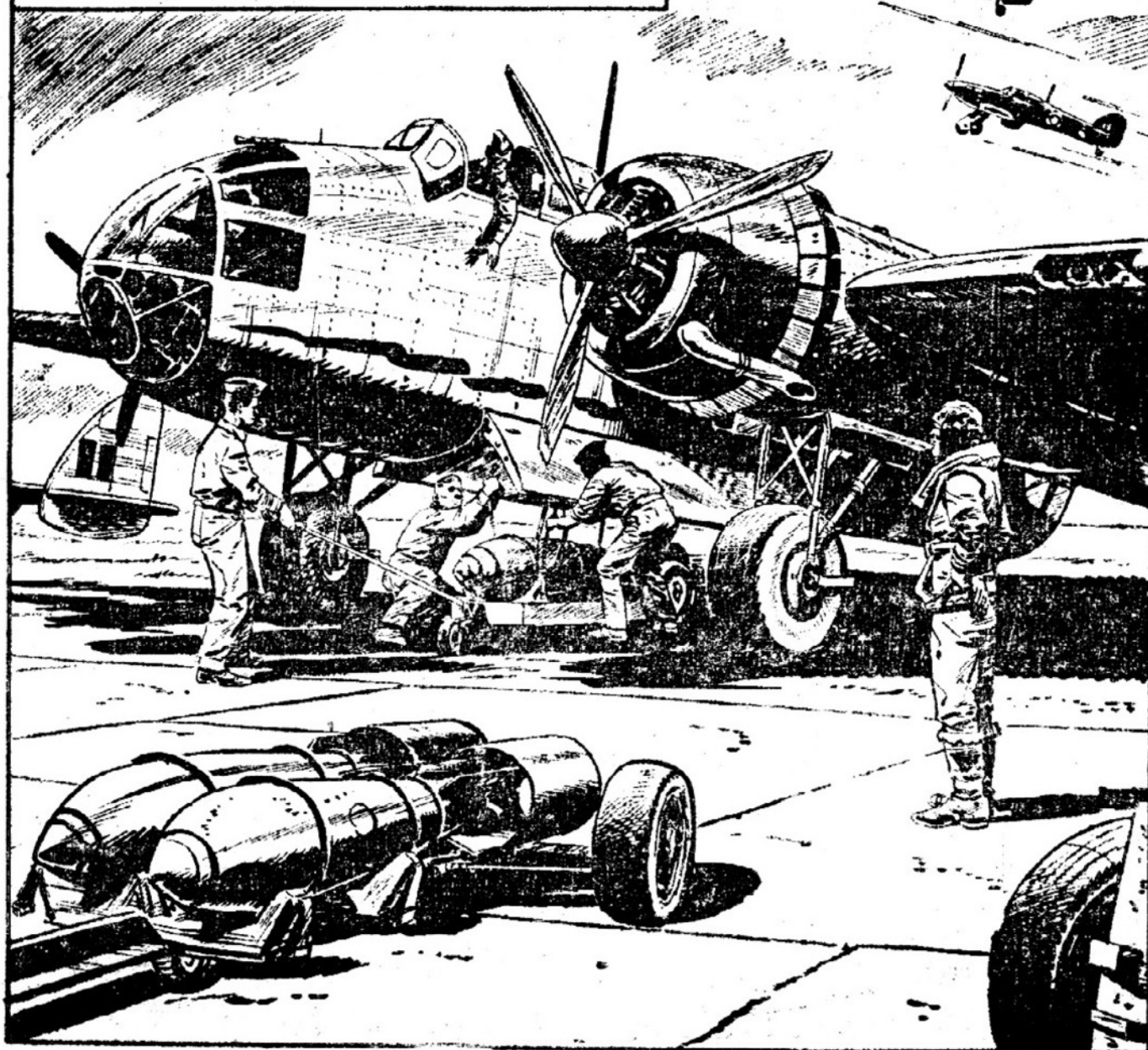
TENDER O ORANGE
TO ALL TENDERS...
I'M GOING IN FOR MY
BOMB RUN. FOLLOW ME IN...
AND MAKE IT *PRECISION*
BOMBING! WE PROBABLY
WON'T HAVE TIME FOR A
SECOND TRY.

NAVIGATOR
HERE, SKIP...
ALL SET...
TURNING
ON...



RAVEN ***over*** ***BERLIN***

IN EARLY 1941, BRITISH BOMBER COMMAND HAD NOT YET BECOME THE MIGHTY FORCE WHICH WAS TO POUND THE RUHR IN THE LATER STAGES OF THE WAR. ITS AIRCRAFT WERE EXCELLENT IN THEIR CLASS... THE RAKISH HAMPDEN, THE ODD-LOOKING WHITLEY, THE SNUB-NOSED BLENHEIM, AND THE GLORIOUS WELLINGTON. BUT THEY WERE FEW IN NUMBER... AND THEIR RANGE WAS LIMITED. THEY WENT OUT DAY AND NIGHT AGAINST THE ENEMY IN ISOLATED SORTIES, STRIKING AT GERMAN COMMUNICATIONS WITH THEIR MODERATE BOMB LOADS.

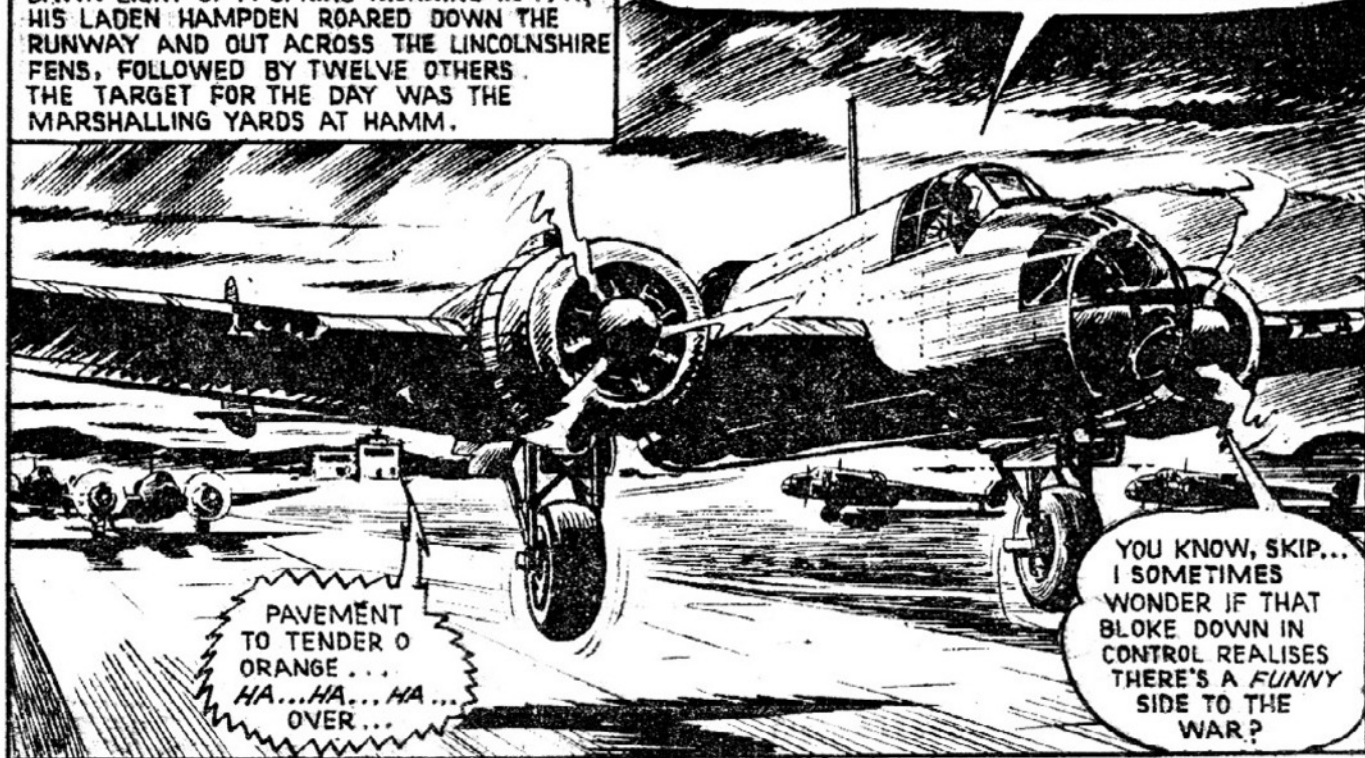


Chapter 1.

DISASTROUS ERROR

WING COMMANDER WEBLEY WAS THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDING OFFICER OF A SQUADRON OF HAMPDENS. IN THE FIRST DAWN LIGHT OF A SPRING MORNING IN 1941, HIS LADEN HAMPDEN ROARED DOWN THE RUNWAY AND OUT ACROSS THE LINCOLNSHIRE FENS, FOLLOWED BY TWELVE OTHERS. THE TARGET FOR THE DAY WAS THE MARSHALLING YARDS AT HAMM.

HALLO, PAVEMENT... THIS IS TENDER O ORANGE! IT'S JUST OCCURRED TO ME... WE'LL BE DROPPING OUR EGGS ON HAMM! SOUNDS AS IF SOMETHING'S COOKING...



PAVEMENT
TO TENDER O
ORANGE...
HA...HA...HA...
OVER...

YOU KNOW, SKIP...
I SOMETIMES
WONDER IF THAT
BLOKE DOWN IN
CONTROL REALISES
THERE'S A FUNNY
SIDE TO THE
WAR?

ALL AIRCRAFT WERE EQUIPPED WITH A DEVICE KNOWN AS I.F.F. ... "IDENTIFICATION FRIEND OR FOE". THIS SENT OUT A SIGNAL WHICH WAS PICKED UP BY BRITISH RADAR, BUT ALSO BY GERMAN SCREENS IF THE DEVICE WAS STILL WORKING WHEN THE AIRCRAFT WAS WITHIN RANGE OF ENEMY DETECTORS. SO THE RULE WAS "ALWAYS SWITCH OFF I.F.F. ON THE WAY OUT, AND SWITCH ON I.F.F. ON THE WAY IN..."

HALLO, TENDERS... THIS IS TENDER O ORANGE! SWITCH OFF YOUR I.F.F. AND MAINTAIN RADIO SILENCE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE! OVER!

NAVIGATOR HERE, SKIP...
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF
THE WEATHER! I'M WATCHING
FOR A WIND CHANGE... BE
PREPARED TO ALTER COURSE...

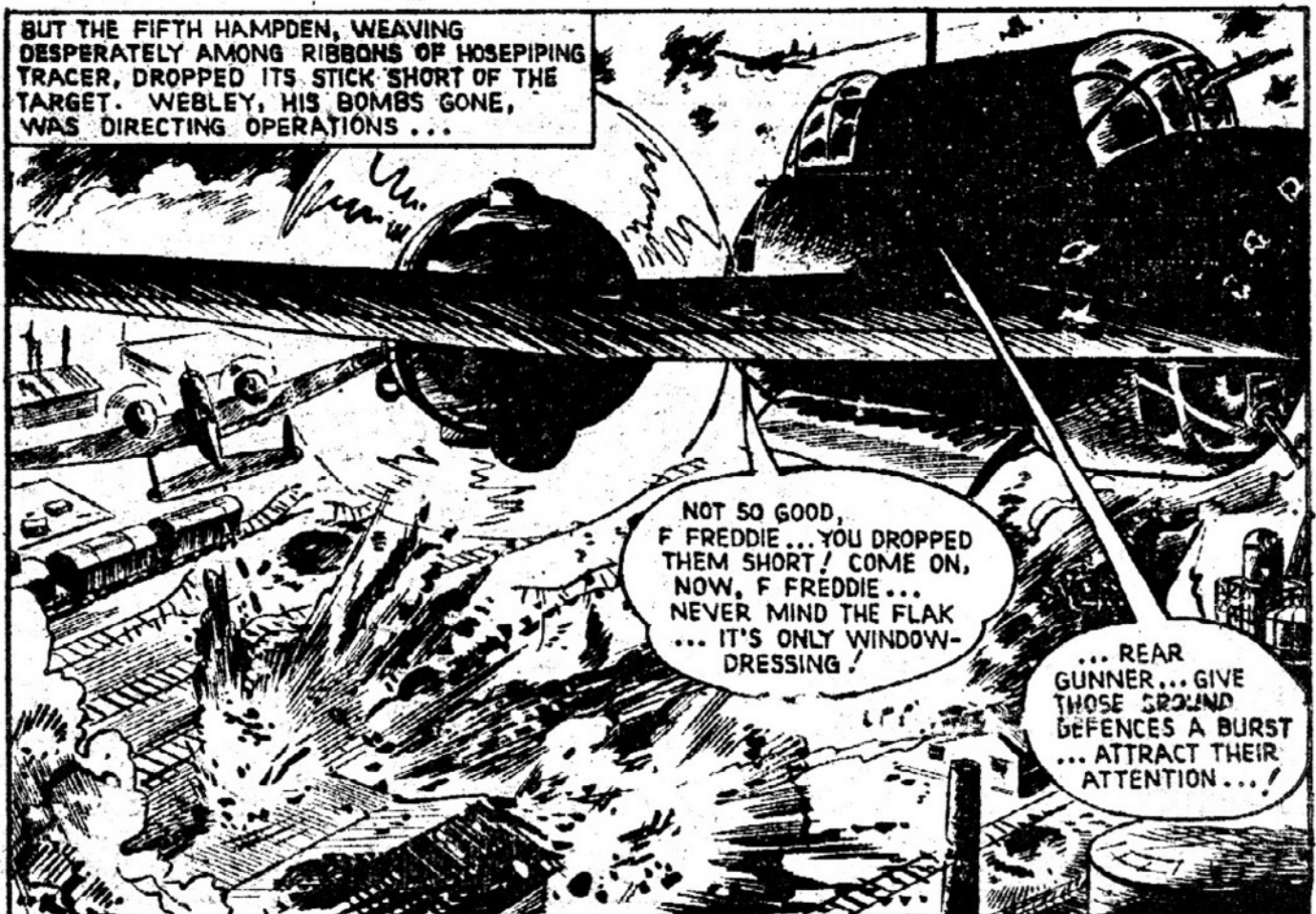


Raven Over Berlin

MOST OF THE BOMBS FELL WITH DEADLY ACCURACY INTO THE CROWDED MARSHALLING YARDS...



BUT THE FIFTH HAMPDEN, WEAVING DESPERATELY AMONG RIBBONS OF HOSEPIPING TRACER, DROPPED ITS STICK SHORT OF THE TARGET. WEBLEY, HIS BOMBS GONE, WAS DIRECTING OPERATIONS...



NOT SO GOOD,
F FREDDIE... YOU DROPPED
THEM SHORT! COME ON,
NOW, F FREDDIE...
NEVER MIND THE FLAK
... IT'S ONLY WINDOW-
DRESSING!

... REAR
GUNNER... GIVE
THOSE GROUND
DEFENCES A BURST
... ATTRACT THEIR
ATTENTION...!

AND THEN THE LUFTWAFFE
ARRIVED ...

M.E.
ONE-O-NINE
DIVING. TURN TO
STARBOARD ...
GO!

CHECK,
REAR-GUNNER...
STARBOARD
TURN IT IS!

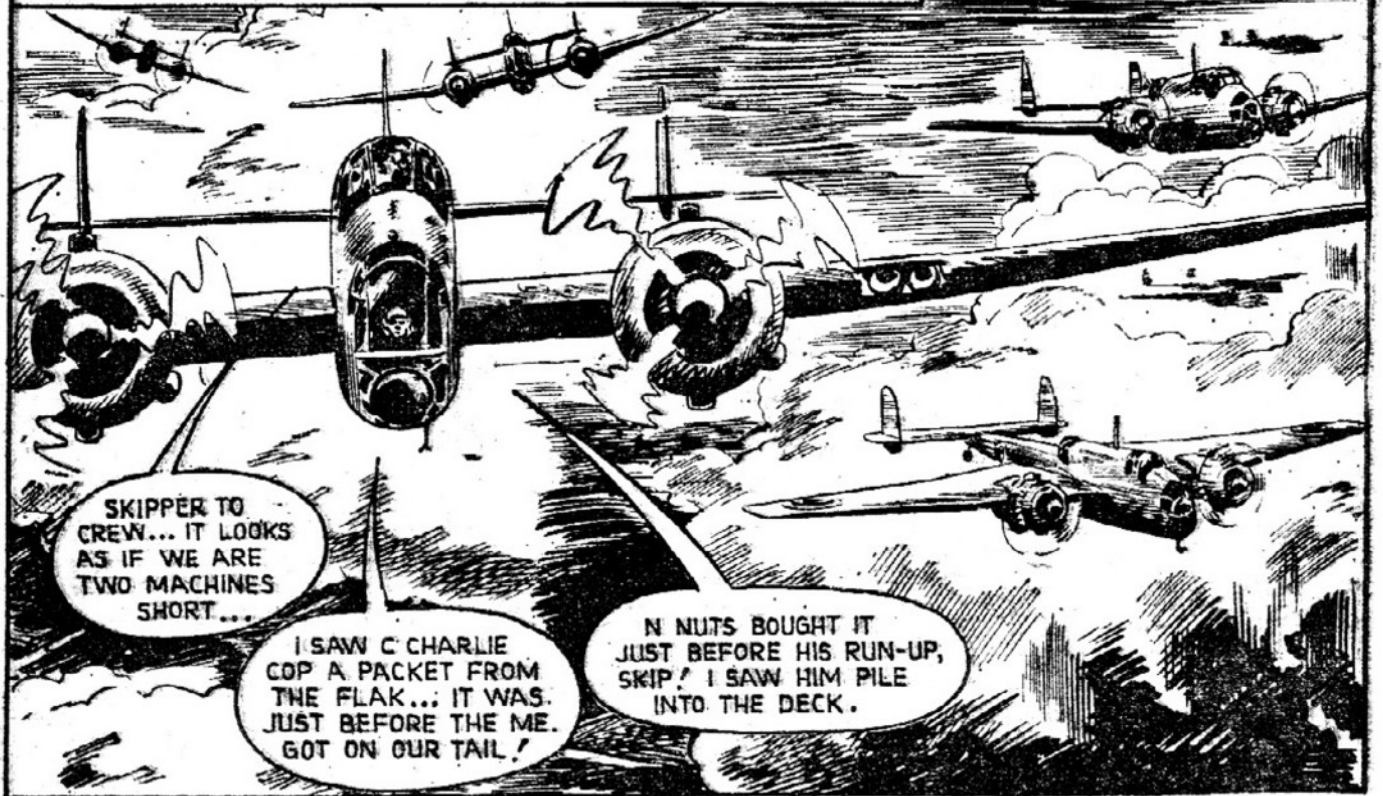
WEBLEY'S HAMPDEN SWEEPED DOWN AND AWAY... BUT NOT BEFORE THE CANNON SHELLS FROM THE PURSUING MESSERSCHMITT HAD FLICKED BRIEFLY THROUGH ITS AIRFRAME. AT 2000 FEET, WEBLEY DRAGGED THE VIBRATING BOMBER OUT OF ITS DIVE. THE ENEMY HAD BROKEN AWAY...

TIME SOMETHING WAS DONE ABOUT
THESE HAND-OPERATED GUN-TURRETS,
SKIPPER... BY THE TIME I'D LUGGED THEM
ROUND AND GOT A BEAD ON THAT JERRY,
THE SHOW WAS OVER!

I COULDN'T AGREE MORE! THE
RUDDER CONTROL HAS BEEN SHOT UP.
OIL PRESSURE IS DROPPING ON THE
PORT ENGINE. WE'VE GOT TO MAKE
HEIGHT IF WE WANT TO SEE BASE!

Raven Over Berlin.

AS HIS DAMAGED MACHINE ROARED NORTHWARDS, STRIVING TO KEEP ITS HEIGHT, WEBLEY CALLED UP THE REST OF THE SQUADRON ON HIS R.T. ... AND SOON THEY WERE FLYING IN CLOSE FORMATION. WEBLEY TOOK STOCK OF THEIR CASUALTIES...

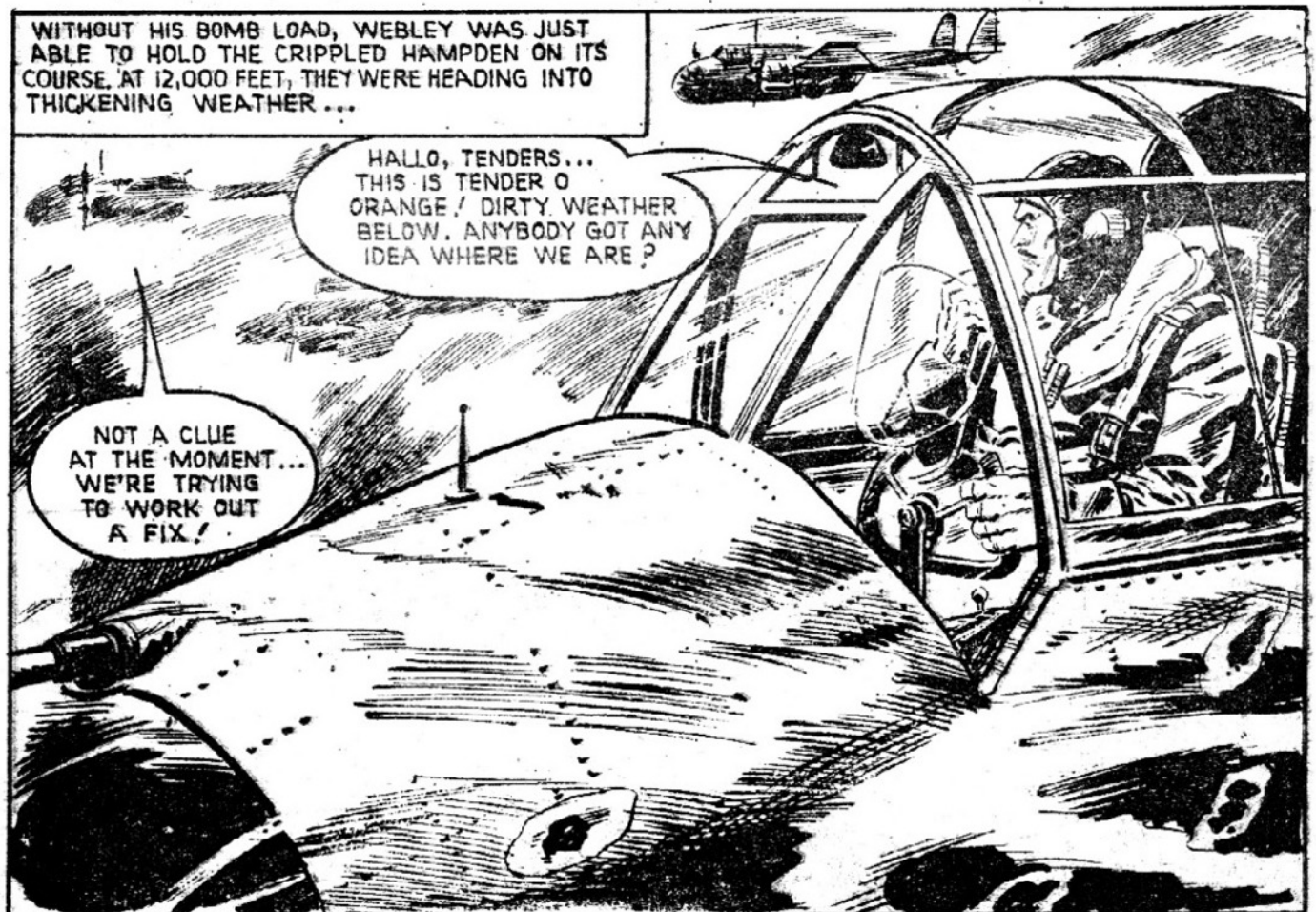


SKIPPER TO CREW... IT LOOKS AS IF WE ARE TWO MACHINES SHORT...

I SAW C CHARLIE COP A PACKET FROM THE FLAK... IT WAS JUST BEFORE THE ME. GOT ON OUR TAIL!

N NUTS BOUGHT IT JUST BEFORE HIS RUN-UP, SKIP! I SAW HIM PILE INTO THE DECK.

WITHOUT HIS BOMB LOAD, WEBLEY WAS JUST ABLE TO HOLD THE CRIPPLED HAMPDEN ON ITS COURSE. AT 12,000 FEET, THEY WERE HEADING INTO THICKENING WEATHER...



HALLO, TENDERS... THIS IS TENDER O ORANGE! DIRTY WEATHER BELOW. ANYBODY GOT ANY IDEA WHERE WE ARE?

NOT A CLUE AT THE MOMENT... WE'RE TRYING TO WORK OUT A FIX!

Raven Over Berlin

7

MEANWHILE, WEBLEY'S NAVIGATOR HAD BEEN BUSY...

NAVIGATOR
HERE, SKIPPER! I
ESTIMATE THAT WE'RE
TRAVELLING PARALLEL TO
THE DUTCH COAST. IF WE
TURN ON TO COURSE TWO-
SEVEN-0 WE SHOULD HAVE
ABOUT FORTY MINUTES
BEFORE REACHING
THE ENGLISH
COAST!

WEBLEY WAGGLED THE WINGS OF HIS HAMPDEN TO INDICATE A CHANGE OF COURSE TO THE REST OF THE SQUADRON...

SURE OF
OUR BEARINGS,
NAVIGATOR?

PRETTY CERTAIN,
SKIP... I'VE BEEN
KEEPING MY
EYES SKINNED!

WELL, I'LL
TAKE YOUR WORD
FOR IT! WE'RE
STILL TOO NEAR THE
JERRIES FOR I.F.F....
SO WE'LL KEEP
RADIO SILENCE
FOR THE TIME
BEING!

Raven Over Berlin

BUT THEIR WIND DRIFT WAS NOT NEARLY AS GREAT AS THE NAVIGATOR HAD IMAGINED. IT WAS NOT THE DUTCH COAST BELOW... IT WAS THE NORTH SEA. THE HAMPDENS WERE ALREADY MORE THAN HALF-WAY HOME. AND IN THE OPERATION ROOM OF BRITISH FIGHTER COMMAND...

SEEMS LIKE A PACK OF BANDITS ALL RIGHT... AND THEY'RE MOVING IN TOWARDS THE COAST IN A BUSINESS-LIKE FASHION! ANY IDENTIFICATION SIGNALS?

WE AREN'T PICKING UP I.F.F. FROM THEM, SIR...? AND THEY'RE WELL WITHIN RADAR RANGE!



THE FIGHTER CONTROLLER REACHED FOR THE TELEPHONE...

WELL, I THINK IT'S PRETTY CERTAIN WHAT THEY ARE... WE'LL CALL OUT EIGHT-O-ONE SQUADRON...

HALLO, REDCOATS... HALLO, REDCOATS! SCRAMBLE! BANDITS APPROACHING TWO-SEVEN-O, ANGELS TWELVE! BUSTER!



Raven Over Berlin

9

WITHIN THREE MINUTES OF THE 'SCRAMBLE' CALL THE HURRICANES OF 804 SQUADRON WERE HURTLING SKYWARDS ...

HALLO, RED FANTAIL ... WHEN WE BREAK CLOUD, TAKE YOUR BOYS INTO THE SUN WHILE WE MAKE OUR APPROACH AT ANGELS TWELVE!



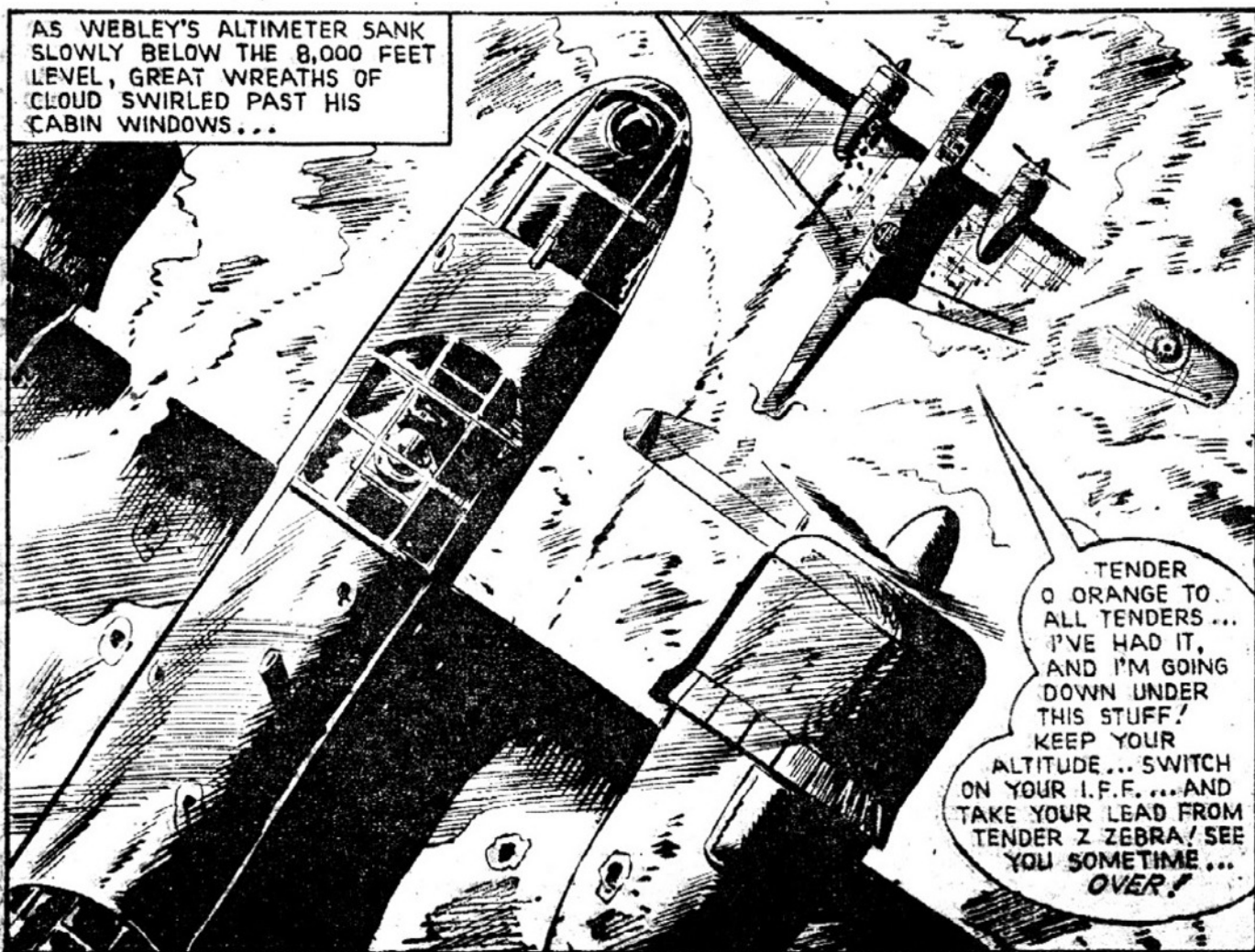
THE CLIMBING HURRICANE SQUADRON DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS ... ONE SECTION CLIMBING ON TO 20,000 FEET, AND THE OTHER LEVELLING OFF AT 12,000 ...

RED FANTAIL TO YELLOW LEADER. WE'VE GOT A GOOD VIEW FROM UP HERE. BANDITS DEAD AHEAD AND SKIPPING THE CLOUDS! THIS IS GOING TO BE *SOME* PARTY!

YELLOW LEADER TO RED FANTAIL ... KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR ME. ONE-O-NINES. IT'S AN OLD HUN TRICK!



Raven Over Berlin



IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT THE HURRICANES ROCKETED IN FOR THE KILL... AND SQUADRON-LEADER CARVER, YELLOW LEADER, GAZED DOWN ON THE CLOUD-DIMMED SHAPES THAT WERE HIS TARGETS...

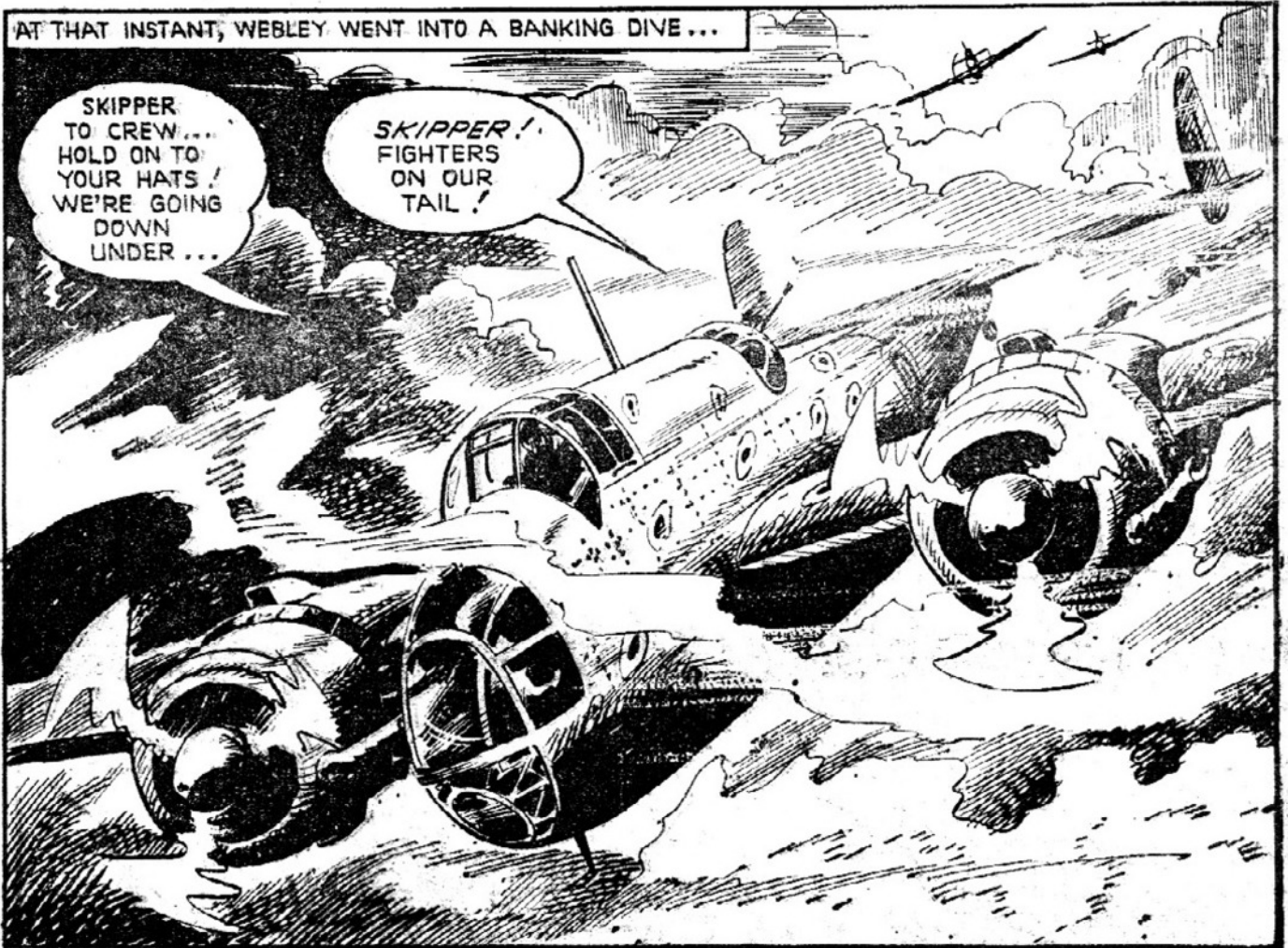
CHAPS, I THINK WE'VE GOT A FLOCK OF DORNIER TWO-ONE-FIVES... I'M GOING TO SETTLE WITH THEIR LEADER BEFORE HE DODGES ANY DEEPER INTO THE MURK! TAKE YOUR PICK... AND TALLYHO!



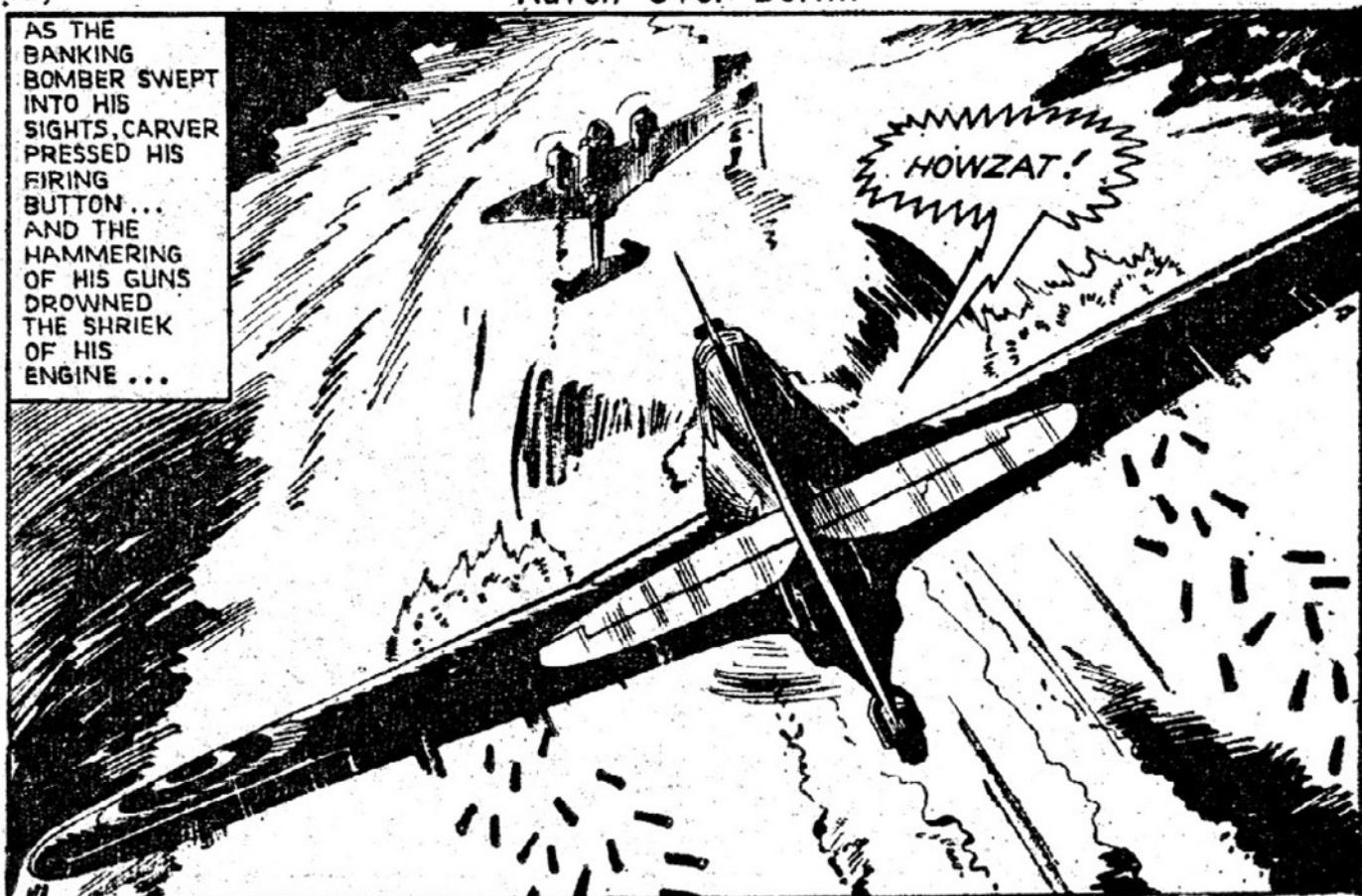
AT THAT INSTANT, WEBLEY WENT INTO A BANKING DIVE...

SKIPPER TO CREW... HOLD ON TO YOUR HATS! WE'RE GOING DOWN UNDER...

SKIPPER! FIGHTERS ON OUR TAIL!



AS THE BANKING BOMBER SWEEPED INTO HIS SIGHTS, CARVER PRESSED HIS FIRING BUTTON... AND THE HAMMERING OF HIS GUNS DROWNED THE SHRIEK OF HIS ENGINE...



BUT IN THE FIGHTER COMMAND OPERATIONS ROOM, FIFTY MILES INLAND...

SIR! RADAR REPORTS THAT THE BOMBERS HAVE STARTED SENDING I.F.F. SIGNALS... THEY MUST BE OURS! AND AIR MINISTRY SAY THAT A HAMPDEN SQUADRON IS DUE BACK FROM A DAYLIGHT RAID!

HURRICANE SQUADRON ATTACKING NOW, SIR...

GREAT SCOTT! GET ON THE R.T. CALL THE FIGHTERS OFF... QUICK!



THE URGENT MESSAGE OF RECALL WAS FLASHED OUT TO THE DISTANT HURRICANES ...

COME IN, RED LEADER AND YELLOW LEADER, EIGHT-O-ONE HURRICANE SQUADRON. STOP ATTACK... REPEAT STOP ATTACK! THERE HAS BEEN AN ERROR... THE BANDITS ARE HAMPDENS, REPEAT, HAMPDENS! DO NOT ATTACK!



BUT IT WAS TOO LATE! THE HURRICANES WERE ALREADY ATTACKING: AS THE SPLIT-SECOND WARNING OF HIS REAR-UPPER GUNNER REACHED HIS EARS, WEBLEY KICKED VIOLENTLY ON THE RUDDER, AND THE HAMPDEN SLEWED INTO A TIGHT TURN.



HOLD TIGHT, EVERYBODY!

AS THE HAMPDEN SHUDDERED ROUND INTO THE SAFETY OF THE CLOUDS, THE ATTACKING HURRICANE STREAKED OVERHEAD ...



GOOD HEAVENS! DID YOU SEE THAT, SIR? IT'S A HURRICANE!

I CERTAINLY DID ... HAVE FIGHTER COMMAND GONE MAD?

IN THE COCKPIT OF THE HURRICANE, CARVER WAS CURSING HIS LUCK... AND THEN THE MESSAGE FROM CONTROL CAME CRACKLING IN...

THAT DORNIER MUST HAVE HAD EYES IN THE BACK OF ITS HEAD! ANOTHER SECOND, AND I'D HAVE RAKED IT!

COME IN, EIGHT-O-ONE HURRICANE SQUADRON! STOP ATTACK... REPEAT, STOP ATTACK! THE BANDITS ARE HAMPDENS!

THE BANDITS ARE ... WHAT!

BUT THE DAMAGE HAD BEEN DONE... IN TWO BRIEF MINUTES A HAMPDEN SQUADRON HAD BEEN TORN FROM THE SKIES. SQUADRON-LEADER CARVER FLUNG HIS HURRICANE INTO A SWEEPING TURN AND GAZED IN HORROR AT THE REMAINS OF THE BATTLE BENEATH...

MERCIFUL HEAVENS! IF THEY ARE OURS, THEN WE'VE ALREADY PRANGED EVERY ONE EXCEPT THE JOHNNIE WHO GOT AWAY FROM ME!



WEBLEY HAD SEEN NOTHING OF THE DISASTER TO HIS SQUADRON... BUT HIS REAR-GUNNER HAD. CARVER, GIRCLING FAR ABOVE, SAW THE SOLITARY HAMPDEN, AND HE SENT HIS HURRICANE INTO A POWER DIVE TOWARDS IT.

WHAT IN THE NAME OF PITY IS HAPPENING, REAR-GUNNER?

IT'S APPALLING, SKIPPER! THE SQUADRON'S BEEN SHOT TO PIECES!

HERE COMES THAT HURRICANE AGAIN... IT'S DIVING ON US FROM TWELVE O'CLOCK!

AN INSTANT LATER, CARVER'S HURRICANE SCREAMED ALONGSIDE THE BOMBER, THROTTLED BACK, AND FLEW WING TO WING WITH IT...

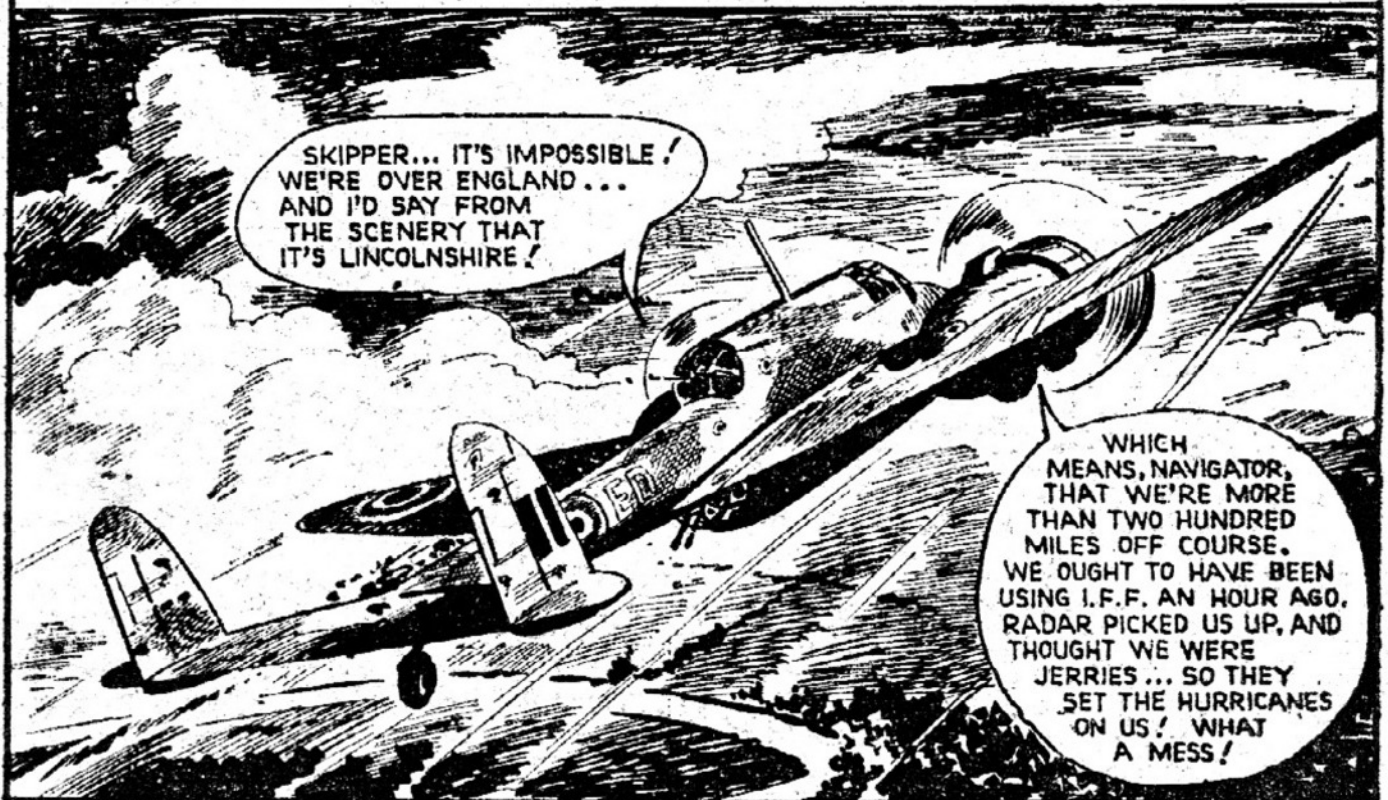
IT WOULD BE A STUPID HAMPDEN! WHY DIDN'T THEY HAVE THEIR I.F.F. FUNCTIONING?

SKIPPER... LET ME GIVE THAT MURDERING SWINE JUST ONE SHORT LITTLE BURST...

HOLD YOUR FIRE, GUNNER... THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH DAMAGE DONE!

Raven Over Berlin

SUDDENLY THE HURRICANE PEELED AWAY, AND WAS GONE. WEBLEY DROPPED THE BIG BOMBER INTO THE CLOUD, ANXIOUSLY WATCHING THE ALTIMETER AS IT FLICKERED SLOWLY BACK. AT 2,000 FEET HE SAW BENEATH HIM, NOT THE NORTH SEA, BUT THE GREEN LANDSCAPE OF EASTERN ENGLAND...



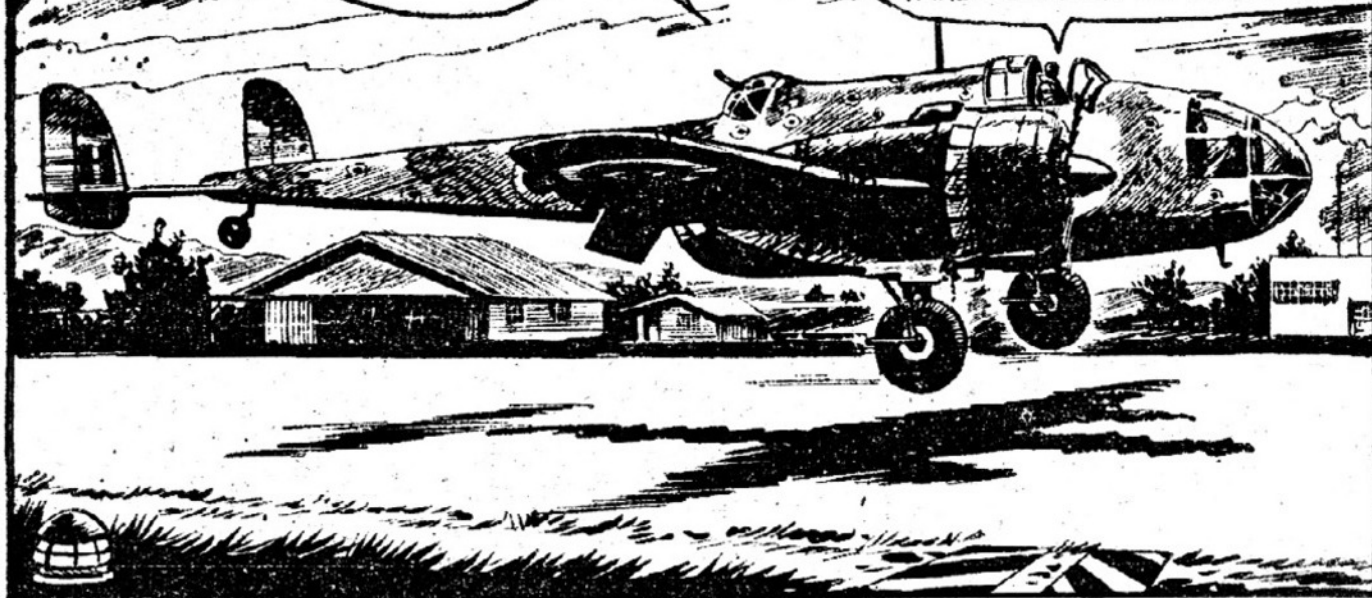
WITH HAGGARD EYES, WEBLEY REALISED THAT THE COURSE HE HAD SET... HAD DESTROYED HIS SQUADRON. HE HAD COME BACK ALONE... THE PILOT WHO HAD MADE THE ERROR!



AND SO, TWENTY MINUTES LATER, THE SOLITARY HAMPDEN, SOLE SURVIVOR OF ITS SQUADRON, CAME LIMPING INTO BASE, WITH WEBLEY BROODING AT THE CONTROLS IN HIS LONELY CABIN...

IT WAS THE SORT OF ACCIDENT THAT COULD HAPPEN TO ANYBODY IN WAR, SIR!

I DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY, NAVIGATOR. THE SAFETY OF THE SQUADRON WAS MY RESPONSIBILITY... IT WAS MY BUSINESS TO KNOW EXACTLY WHERE WE WERE, EVEN IF IT MEANT STOOGING AROUND AT TREE-TOP HEIGHT... I SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN CHANCES ON YOUR FIGURES.



AT DISPERSAL, THE STATION ADJUTANT WAS WAITING, AND ONE LOOK AT WEBLEY'S FACE TOLD HIM THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DISASTER.

IT LOOKS VERY SERIOUS, SIR... NONE OF THE OTHERS HAVE RETURNED! H.Q. HAVE BEEN YELLING DOWN THE PHONE FOR THE LAST HALF HOUR! IT SEEMS THAT FIGHTER CONTROL SET EIGHT-O-ONE SQUADRON ON TO YOU BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T PICK UP YOUR I.F.F.

SO IT WAS EIGHT-O-ONE SQUADRON. THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO KNOW... SEND ME THE WARRANT OFFICER IN CHARGE OF STORES...



Raven Over Berlin

WHITE-FACED AND GRIM, WEBLEY ISSUED TERSE AND STRANGE ORDERS. THERE WAS A LOT OF UNUSUAL ACTIVITY ROUND THE BOMB BAYS OF HIS HAMPDEN... AND FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, HE AND HIS CREW WERE AIRBORNE AGAIN.

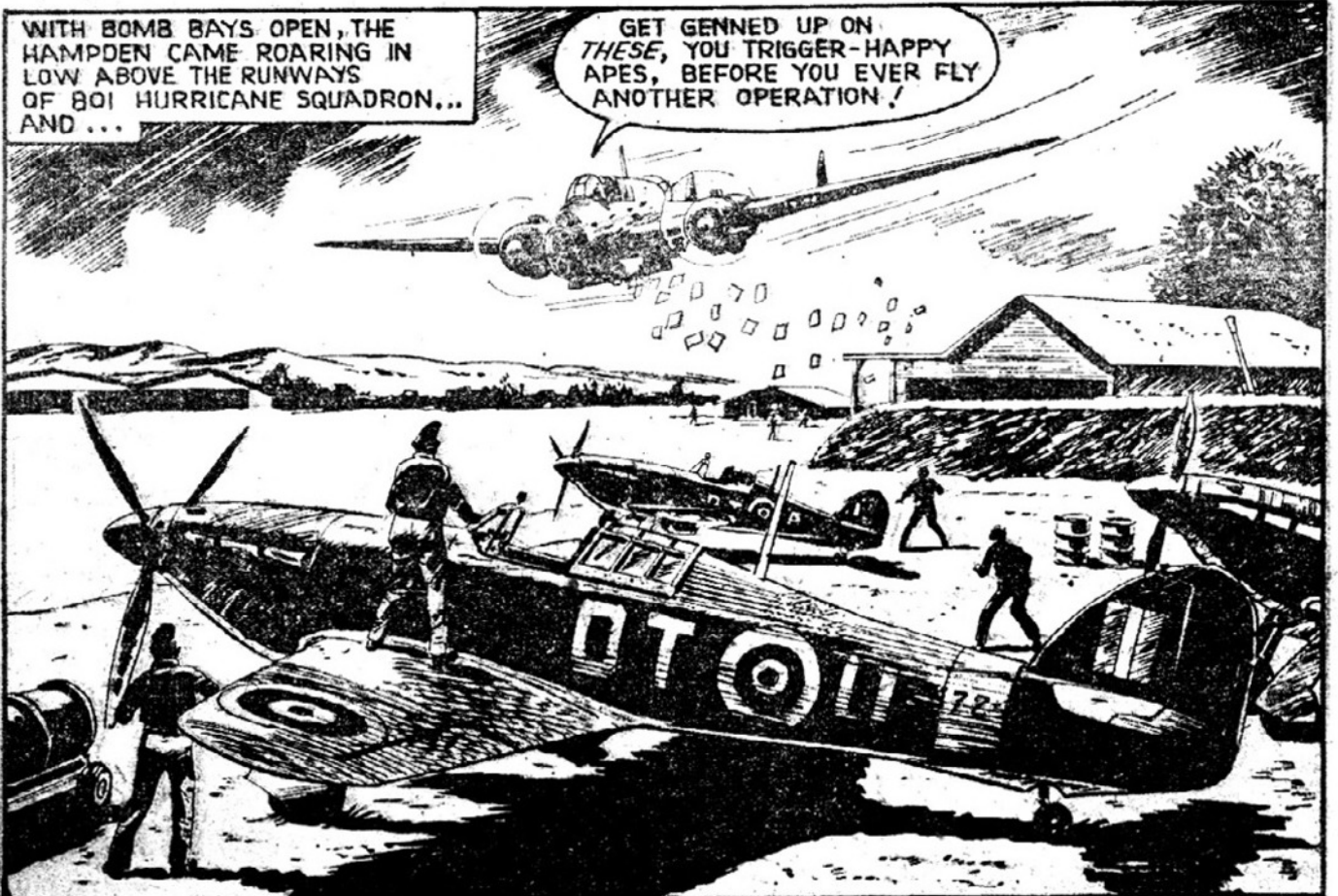
THAT MACHINE'S ALMOST HAD IT... IT SHOULDN'T BE FLYING!

IT'S THE C.O.... HE'S GONE AS MAD AS A HATTER! HE MADE US FILL THE BOMB BAYS WITH ALL THE AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION MANUALS ON THE STATION!



WITH BOMB BAYS OPEN, THE HAMPDEN CAME ROARING IN LOW ABOVE THE RUNWAYS OF 801 HURRICANE SQUADRON... AND ...

GET GENNED UP ON THESE, YOU TRIGGER-HAPPY APES, BEFORE YOU EVER FLY ANOTHER OPERATION!



WHEN THE HURRICANE PILOTS OF 801 SQUADRON SAW THE LITTER OF AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION MANUALS THAT STRADDLED THE AIRFIELD, THEY KNEW EXACTLY WHAT WEBLEY MEANT, AND HOW HE FELT...

THAT MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE SURVIVORS FROM OUR MURDER MISSION, CARVER... HE'S CERTAINLY GONE OUT OF HIS WAY TO MAKE HIS POINT!

IT WAS A BAD BUSINESS, SIR... BUT WE REALLY WEREN'T TO BLAME! THE HAMPDEN LEADER SHOULD HAVE USED HIS L.F.F. AT THE RIGHT TIME!



HALF AN HOUR LATER CARVER BROUGHT HIS HURRICANE DOWN ON THE GRIMLY DESERTED RUNWAY OF WEBLEY'S HAMPDEN STATION...

THIS IS A MISSION I'D RATHER NOT HAVE... BUT SINCE I LED THE SQUADRON THAT SHOT THEM DOWN...

GREAT HEAVENS... IT'S A HURRICANE! IN THE OLD MAN'S PRESENT STATE OF MIND, THIS BLOKE WOULD HAVE BEEN WISER TO STAY AWAY!



Raven Over Berlin

CARVER MADE HIS WAY TO THE C.O.'S OFFICE ... HE FOUND A TENSE, HAGGARD MAN AT THE WINDOW WAITING FOR HIM ...



I WATCHED YOU COME IN ... THE NAME IS WEBLEY ... I WAS THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF A FINE HAMPDEN SQUADRON. NOW SAY YOUR PIECE ...

I ... I FELT I OUGHT TO DROP OVER AND SAY SOMETHING ... AFTER ALL, SIR ... I WAS LEADING THAT HURRICANE SQUADRON ...

WEBLEY STIFFENED ... AND HIS EYES BORED GRIMLY INTO CARVER'S FACE ...



SO IT WAS YOU! NOBODY BUT A CRAZY IDIOT COULD POSSIBLY MISTAKE A HAMPDEN FOR A DORNIER! MY SQUADRON WAS CLEAR OF THE CLOUDS ... YOU HAD EXCELLENT VISIBILITY ... AND YET YOU SHOT US UP ... YOU DESTROYED US! WHAT KIND OF FOOLS ARE THEY TURNING INTO FIGHTER PILOTS?

AS CARVER REACTED HOTLY TO THE SLUR, WEBLEY CUT ACROSS HIS WORDS LIKE A WHIPLASH ...



NOW LOOK HERE, SIR ... I CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO ...

YOU CAN'T ALLOW ME, YOU YOUNG WHIPPERSNAPPER! YOU'RE TALKING TO A SUPERIOR OFFICER! AND I DARNED WELL WON'T ARGUE WITH YOU ... I'LL TELL YOU ...!

BUT WEBLEY HAD GONE TOO FAR, AND CARVER'S VOICE WAS TENSE WITH FURY.

I WILL SAY WHAT I THINK... AND YOU CAN SHELTER BEHIND YOUR RANK IF YOU LIKE! IT WAS YOU WHO WERE THE FOOL. YOU HAD I.F.F. AND DIDN'T USE IT! FIGHTER CONTROL IDENTIFIED YOU AS AN ENEMY... NOT US! WE OBEYED ORDERS... AND HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT THOSE ORDERS!



WEBLEY'S ANGER COLLAPSED AND IT SEEMED TO CARVER THAT HE WAS FACING A MAN SUDDENLY AGED.



ALL RIGHT, I KNOW THAT! DO YOU THINK I'M NOT AWARE OF THE ERROR I MADE? IT'LL LIVE WITH ME TO THE END OF MY DAYS! BUT THAT DOESN'T LESSEN YOUR RESPONSIBILITY... IT WAS YOU WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER!

ABRUPTLY, CARVER HAD HAD ENOUGH... AND HE TURNED ON HIS HEEL, AND LEFT WEBLEY ALONE.

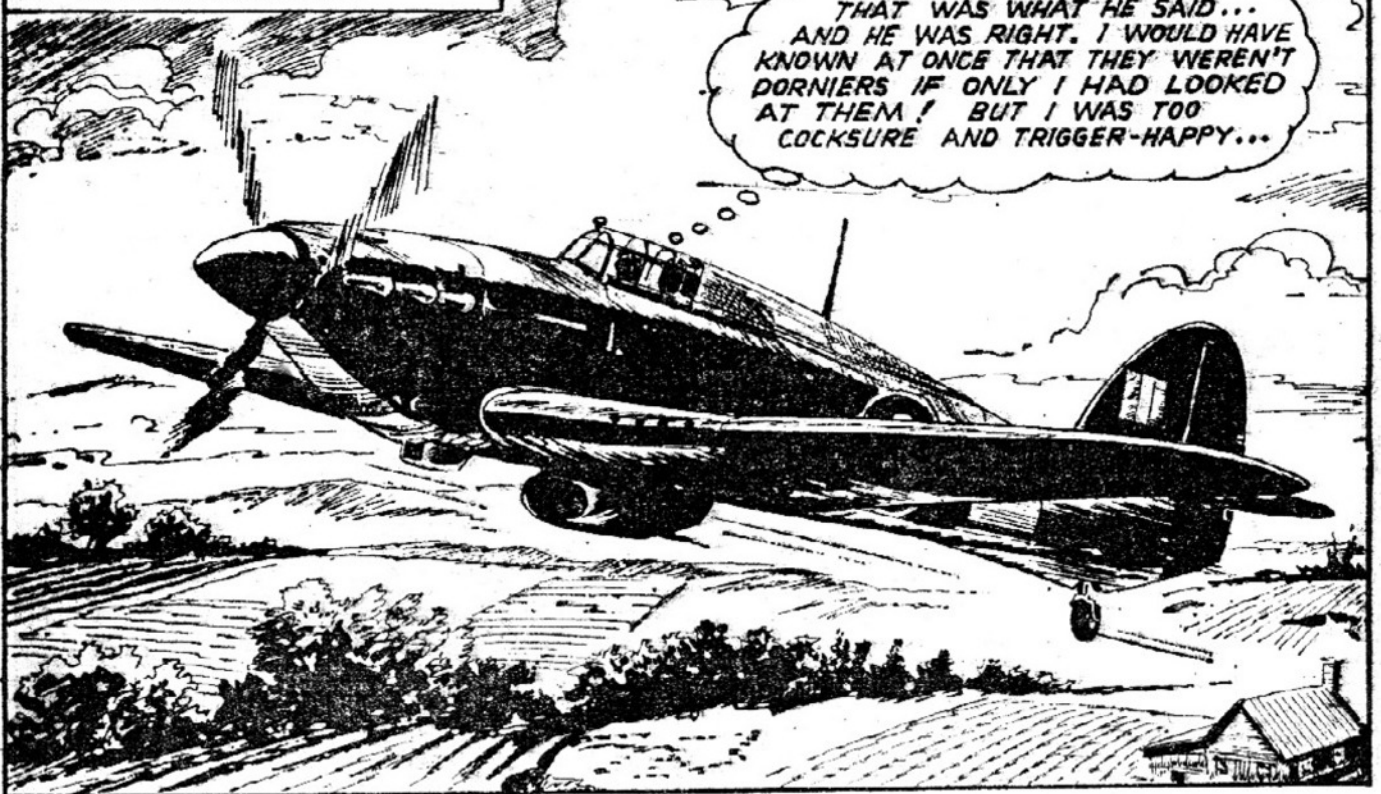
I SUPPOSE I'M A SWINE! I TOOK IT OUT OF THAT YOUNG MAN JUST TO EASE THE BURDEN ON MY OWN MIND! IT WAS EXACTLY AS HE SAID... HE WAS ONLY OBEYING ORDERS! THE ONLY JOKER IN THE PACK WAS ME!



Raven Over Berlin

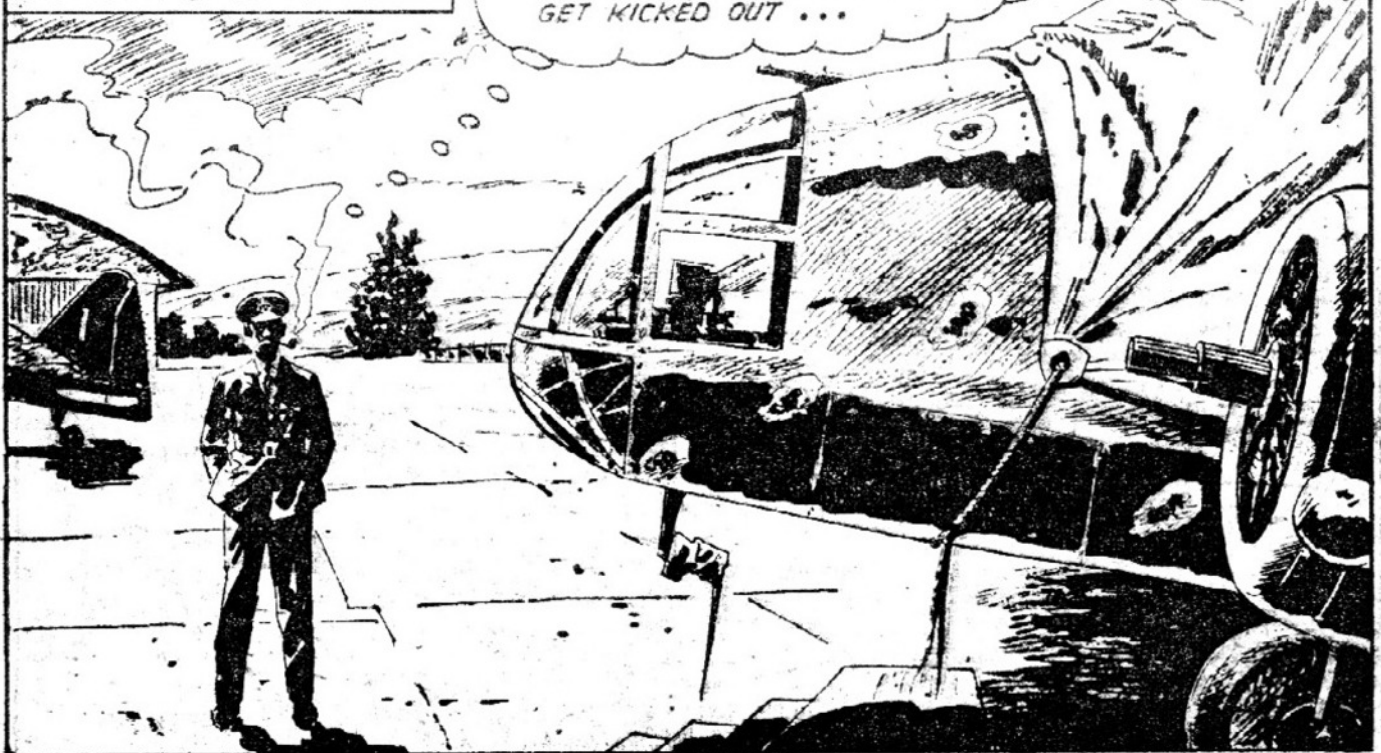
BUT CARVER, TOO, WAS ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS, AS HIS HURRICANE CLIMBED HIGH INTO THE LIGHT OF THE SETTING SUN...

'IT WAS YOU WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER'... THAT WAS WHAT HE SAID... AND HE WAS RIGHT. I WOULD HAVE KNOWN AT ONCE THAT THEY WEREN'T DORNIER'S IF ONLY I HAD LOOKED AT THEM! BUT I WAS TOO COCKSURE AND TRIGGER-HAPPY...



IT WAS DUSK WHEN WEBLEY FINALLY LEFT HIS OFFICE. DEEP IN THOUGHT, HE WALKED SLOWLY ROUND THE PERIMETER TRACK OF THE AIRFIELD... UNTIL HE REACHED HIS HAMPDEN.

SHE WAS A FINE MACHINE... BUT I'LL NEVER FLY HER AGAIN! AFTER THIS, I COULD NEVER FACE A SQUADRON OF OPERATIONAL PILOTS. I MUST TRANSFER TO A GROUND JOB. IN ANY CASE, THEY'LL HOLD A COURT OF ENQUIRY, AND I'LL PROBABLY GET KICKED OUT...

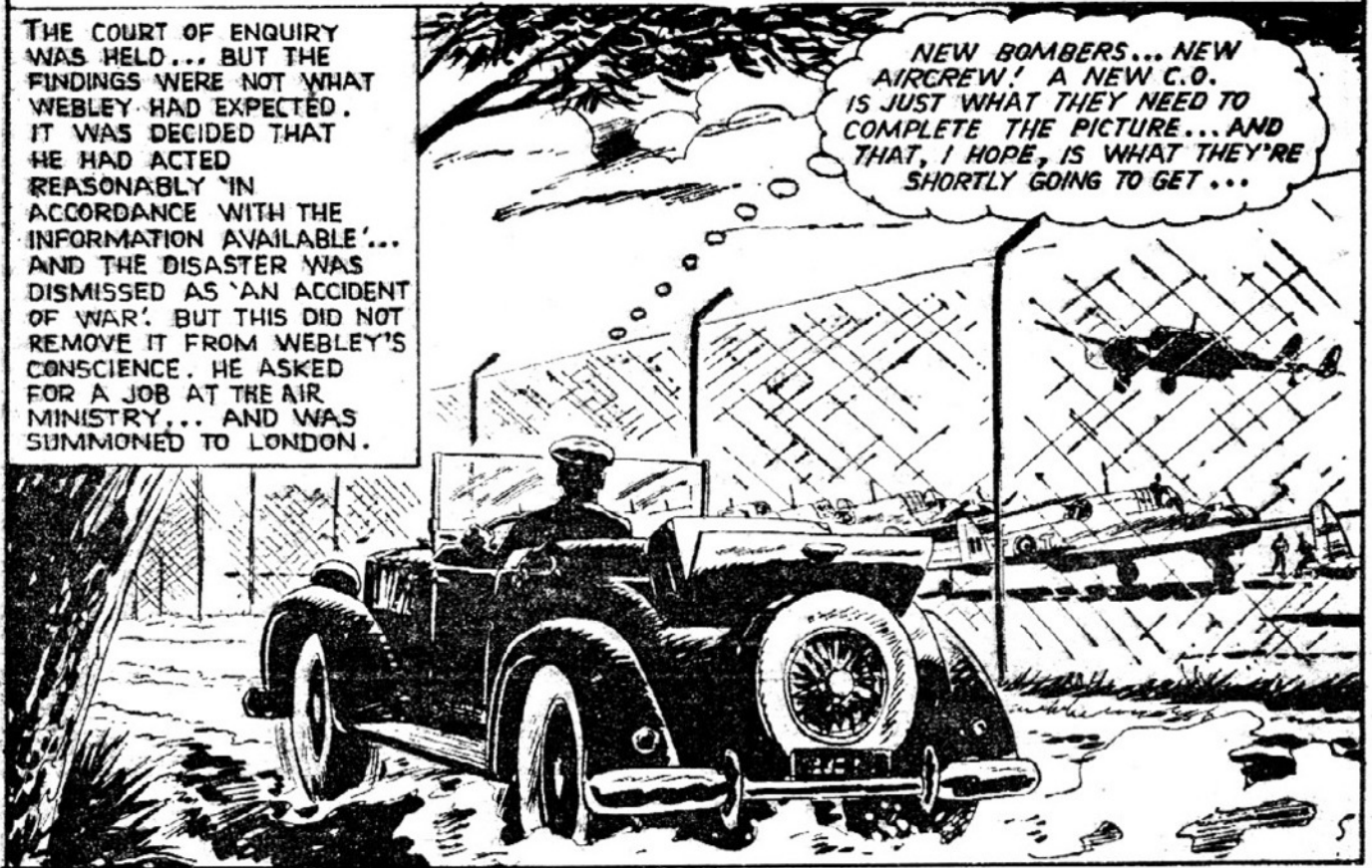


Chapter 2.

NEW COMMAND

THE COURT OF ENQUIRY WAS HELD... BUT THE FINDINGS WERE NOT WHAT WEBLEY HAD EXPECTED. IT WAS DECIDED THAT HE HAD ACTED REASONABLY 'IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE'... AND THE DISASTER WAS DISMISSED AS 'AN ACCIDENT OF WAR'. BUT THIS DID NOT REMOVE IT FROM WEBLEY'S CONSCIENCE. HE ASKED FOR A JOB AT THE AIR MINISTRY... AND WAS SUMMONED TO LONDON.

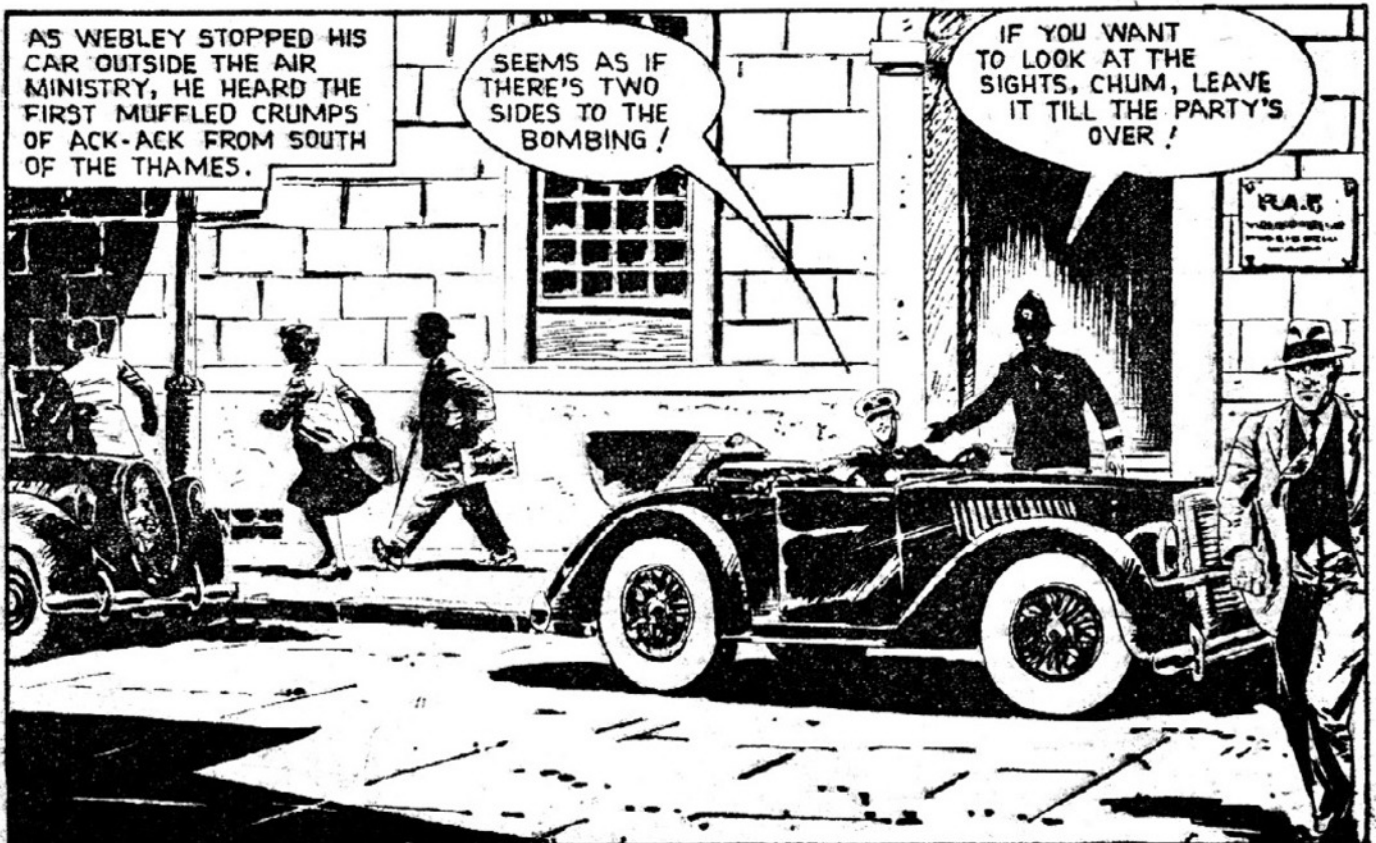
NEW BOMBERS... NEW AIRCREW! A NEW C.O. IS JUST WHAT THEY NEED TO COMPLETE THE PICTURE... AND THAT, I HOPE, IS WHAT THEY'RE SHORTLY GOING TO GET...



AS WEBLEY STOPPED HIS CAR OUTSIDE THE AIR MINISTRY, HE HEARD THE FIRST MUFFLED CRUMPS OF ACK-ACK FROM SOUTH OF THE THAMES.

SEEMS AS IF THERE'S TWO SIDES TO THE BOMBING!

IF YOU WANT TO LOOK AT THE SIGHTS, CHUM, LEAVE IT TILL THE PARTY'S OVER!



INSIDE THE BUILDING, PERSONNEL WERE HURRYING WITHOUT PANIC TO THE AIR RAID SHELTERS. IN EXASPERATION, WEBLEY STOPPED A SERGEANT.

HEY, SERGEANT! WHERE DO I FIND AIR VICE-MARSHAL USHER?

ON THE ROOF, SIR... BUT IF I WAS YOU I'D WAIT UNTIL THE ALL-CLEAR!



BUT WEBLEY MADE HIS WAY TO THE ROOF. THE ENEMY WERE BOMBING THE DOCKS. IN THE SKY TO THE EAST HE SAW THE SILVERY SPECKS OF AIRCRAFT MOVING AMONG THE FLAK. TWO DARK PILLARS OF SMOKE WERE ALREADY HANGING ON THE HORIZON. THEN WEBLEY SAW THE GROUP OF R.A.F. OFFICERS, WATCHING THE RAID THROUGH BINOCULARS. HE QUIETLY INTRODUCED HIMSELF TO USHER.

I'M WING COMMANDER WEBLEY, SIR... MIND IF I STAY WITH YOU TO WATCH THE SHOW?

THIS ISN'T A SHOW, WEBLEY! IT'S THE LUFTWAFFE HITTING OUR DOCKS! BUT THEY'VE NO CONCENTRATION! WE LEARN BY WATCHING THEM!



USHER WAS A GRUFF, DYNAMIC MAN, WHO EXPRESSED HIMSELF EXPLOSIVELY...

QUITE RIGHT, SIR... BUT THEY'RE TRYING PRECISION BOMBING IN SQUADRONS, THE SAME AS WE ARE DOING!

EH? WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT? YOU'RE JUST A STAFF OFFICER!

YOUR MISTAKE, SIR... I'M AN OPERATIONAL C.O., AND I'VE BEEN HITTING THE RUHR THREE TIMES WEEKLY FOR THE LAST THREE MONTHS... SO I DO KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT IT!

THE DYNAMIC AIR VICE-MARSHAL LOWERED HIS BINOCULARS, AND SWUNG ROUND TO STARE AT THE YOUNGER MAN.

SO YOU'RE AN OPERATIONAL JOHNNIE... WELL, WEBLEY, IF YOU WERE GOERING, HOW WOULD YOU SET ABOUT FLATTENING LONDON DOCKS, EH?

I'D DO THREE THINGS, SIR. FIRST, I'D USE FOUR-ENGINE BOMBERS CARRYING HEAVY LOADS. SECONDLY, I'D EMPLOY THEM MASSIVELY, HUNDREDS AT A TIME, AND THIRDLY I'D USE CARPET BOMBING, ON THE SAME PRINCIPLES AS AN ARTILLERY BARRAGE. THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO FLATTEN AN INDUSTRIAL TARGET...

WEBLEY HAD VERY DEFINITE THEORIES ON THE ROLE OF BOMBER COMMAND IN THE WAR.

I AGREE WITH YOU! WE'RE DOING A LOT OF PLANNING AT THE MOMENT... BUT WE CAN TALK ABOUT THAT LATER. THE QUESTION IS... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I APPLIED FOR A STAFF JOB, SIR. YOU ASKED ME TO COME AND SEE YOU...

THE ALL-CLEAR WAS WALLING OUT AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY DOWN FROM THE ROOF.

I WANT TO COME OFF OPS, SIR! CAN YOU GIVE ME A JOB?

I REMEMBER NOW, WEBLEY, I BROUGHT YOU HERE TO GIVE YOU A DRESSING DOWN. WE NEED ALL THE GOOD MEN ON OPS WE CAN GET! BUT NOW THAT I'VE HEARD YOU TALK, I'VE CHANGED MY MIND... YOU'VE GOT IDEAS! YES, I'LL GIVE YOU A JOB!



IN USHER'S OFFICE, THE AIR VICE-MARSHAL BRISKLY OUTLINED WHAT HE HAD IN MIND.

WEBLEY... I WANT A GOOD MAN TO HEAD A RESEARCH TEAM... A MAN WITH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE WHO CAN ALSO THINK IN A FRESH WAY. THE FUTURE OF BOMBER COMMAND MAY REST ON WHAT HE IS ABLE TO DIG UP...

I'M AT YOUR DISPOSAL, SIR... AND I DON'T THINK I'LL LET YOU DOWN!



THREE DAYS LATER, WEBLEY HAD HANDED OVER HIS COMMAND AND WAS BACK AT THE AIR MINISTRY TO JOIN THE RESEARCH UNIT...



WELL, GENTLEMEN... THIS IS WING COMMANDER WEBLEY, WHO IS TAKING OVER THE UNIT. THE BOFFINS ARE HERE TO OBLIGE US WITH A RUN-DOWN ON THE LATEST TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS! THEY'LL TELL YOU ALL THEY KNOW... AND THEN YOU'LL TAKE OVER FROM THERE... SO LET'S GET GOING!

FOR WEBLEY AND HIS TEAM, THE NEXT WEEK COMPRISED A CONSTANT ROUND OF LECTURES, FILM SHOWS, AND DISCUSSIONS.

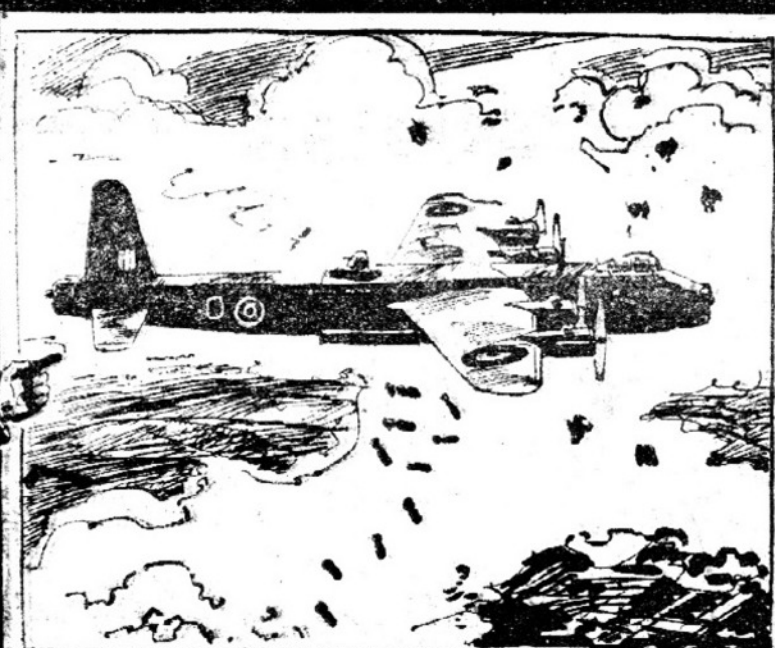
... UP TO NOW, GENTLEMEN, WE HAVE BOMBED STRATEGIC TARGETS, RAILWAY COMMUNICATIONS, DOCKYARDS, AND MILITARY POSITIONS. BUT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE WAR TO BE CARRIED INTO THE INDUSTRIAL HEART OF THE GERMAN WAR EFFORT... THE RUHR VALLEY...



WEBLEY SHUDDERED AS HE THOUGHT WHAT THE FORMIDABLE RUHR DEFENCES WOULD DO TO THE OBSOLETE AIRCRAFT WHICH WERE AT PRESENT OPERATING ...



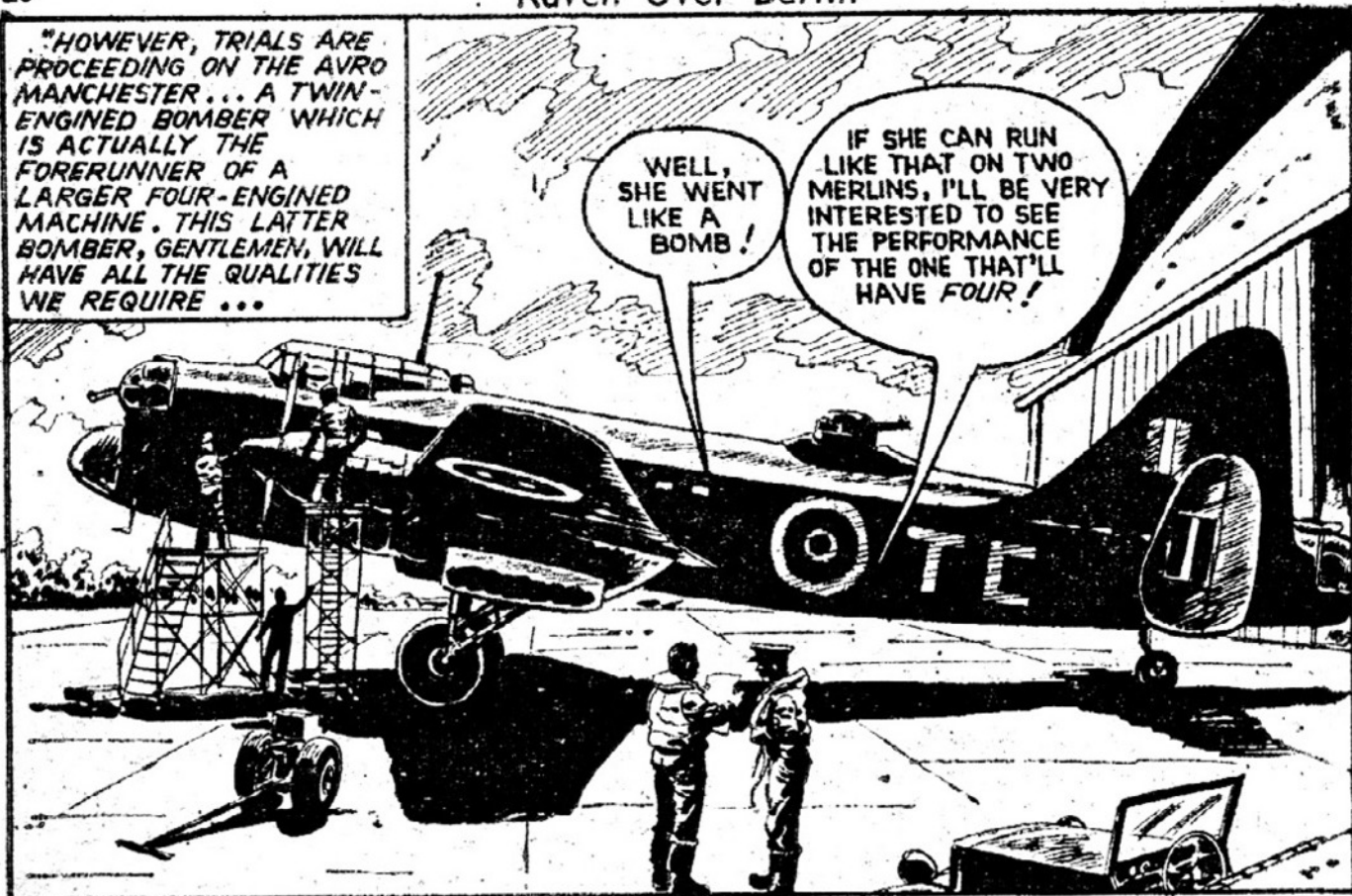
THE AIRCRAFT YOU SEE HERE IS THE MOST EFFICIENT HEAVY BOMBER IN SERVICE TODAY. BUT WE HAVEN'T ENOUGH OF THEM YET... AND IN ANY CASE, THE STIRLING ISN'T FAST ENOUGH TO BREACH THE RUHR FLAK BARRIER! WE NEED MORE MANOEUVRABLE MACHINES, CAPABLE OF GREATER ALTITUDE...



"HOWEVER, TRIALS ARE PROCEEDING ON THE AVRO MANCHESTER... A TWIN-ENGINE BOMBER WHICH IS ACTUALLY THE FORERUNNER OF A LARGER FOUR-ENGINE MACHINE. THIS LATTER BOMBER, GENTLEMEN, WILL HAVE ALL THE QUALITIES WE REQUIRE ...

WELL, SHE WENT LIKE A BOMB!

IF SHE CAN RUN LIKE THAT ON TWO MERLINS, I'LL BE VERY INTERESTED TO SEE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE ONE THAT'LL HAVE FOUR!

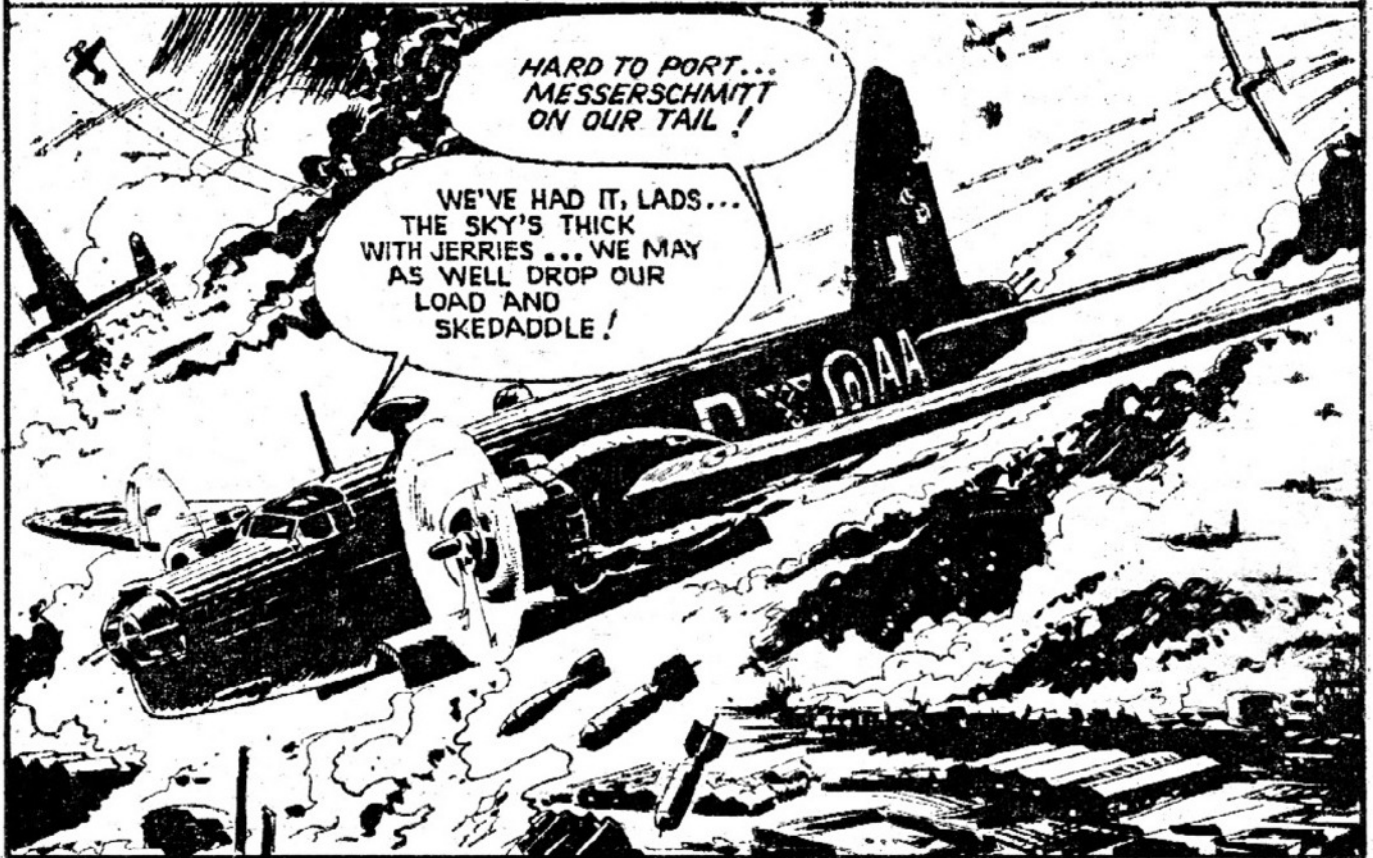


AND SO THE BOMBING RESEARCH UNIT DISCUSSED EXISTING BOMBING TECHNIQUES ...

NOW, GENTLEMEN... WITH THE EXISTING TECHNIQUE OF 'PRECISION' BOMBING, THE NAVIGATOR HAS TO DIRECT THE PILOT REGARDLESS OF FLAK OR ENEMY FIGHTERS. OFTEN ALL THE EFFORT OF REACHING THE TARGET AREA IS WASTED



"ACCURATE BOMBING HAS BEEN MORE OF AN ART THAN A SCIENCE. RAIDS HAVE BEEN MADE ON SPECIAL TARGETS BY A FEW DOZEN AIRCRAFT... AND GROUND DEFENCES AND FIGHTERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONCENTRATE. LOSSES HAVE BEEN HEAVY; AND RESULTS HAVE BEEN POOR..."



HARD TO PORT...
MESSERSCHMITT
ON OUR TAIL!

WE'VE HAD IT, LADS...
THE SKY'S THICK
WITH JERRIES... WE MAY
AS WELL DROP OUR
LOAD AND
SKEDADDLE!

THE LECTURER INDICATED
THE AREA OF THE RUHR
WHICH WAS KNOWN IN
YEARS TO COME AS
'HAPPY VALLEY' BY THE
THOUSANDS OF AIRCREW
WHO WOULD RUN THE
GAUNTLET OVER IT.

BUT IN SIX
MONTHS, THE NEW FOUR-
ENGINE LONG-RANGE
BOMBERS WILL BE IN FULL
PRODUCTION. EACH BOMBER
WILL CARRY UP TO EIGHT TONS
OF HIGH EXPLOSIVES. IMAGINE.
SIX HUNDRED OF THESE
MACHINES DROPPING THEIR
LOAD INTO AN AREA OF
THREE SQUARE MILES...
AND YOU WILL GET SOME
IDEA OF THE STRIKING
POWER WE AIM AT...



Raven Over Berlin

AT QUESTION TIME THAT DAY, WEBLEY HAD A FEW SEARCHING POINTS TO MAKE...

NATURALLY, THE MASS RAIDS WILL BE AT NIGHT, TO MAKE IT HARDER FOR JERRY'S DEFENCES, THEREFORE THE QUESTION ARISES... HOW IS THE TARGET AREA TO BE PIN-POINTED?

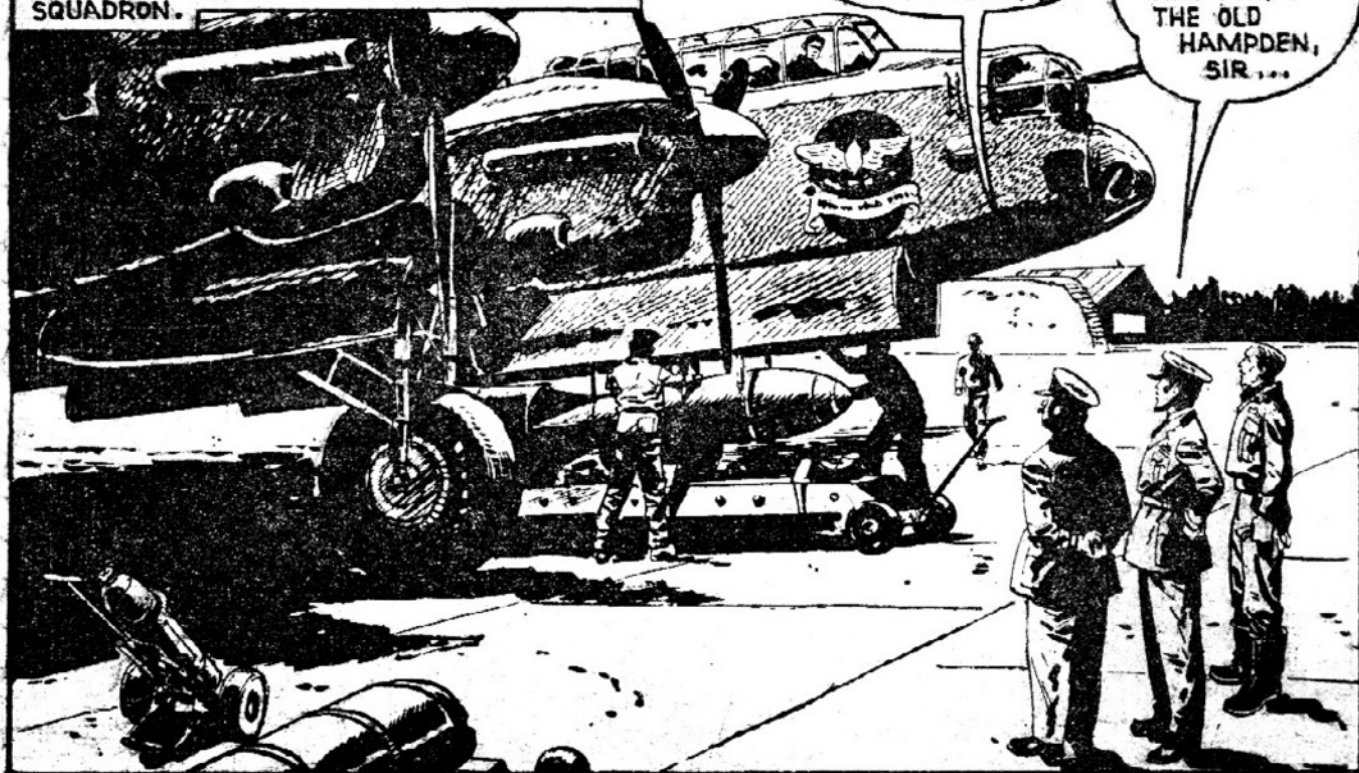
PATHFINDERS! A PICKED SQUADRON OF SKILLED AIRCREWS WHO WILL LEAD THE WAY, AND MARK THE TARGET AREA WITH FLARES...



AFTER MANY MONTHS OF HARD WORK, ONE OF THE MACHINES WHICH WERE TO STRIKE THE RUHR... THE AVRO LANCASTER... WAS ROLLING OFF THE PRODUCTION LINES. WEBLEY WENT WITH USHER TO SEE THE FIRST DELIVERY TO AN OPERATIONAL SQUADRON.

WELL, WEBLEY... THIS IS IT! THIS IS THE FIRST THAT'S GOING TO SMACK JERRY'S INDUSTRY!

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY FROM THE OLD HAMPDEN, SIR...



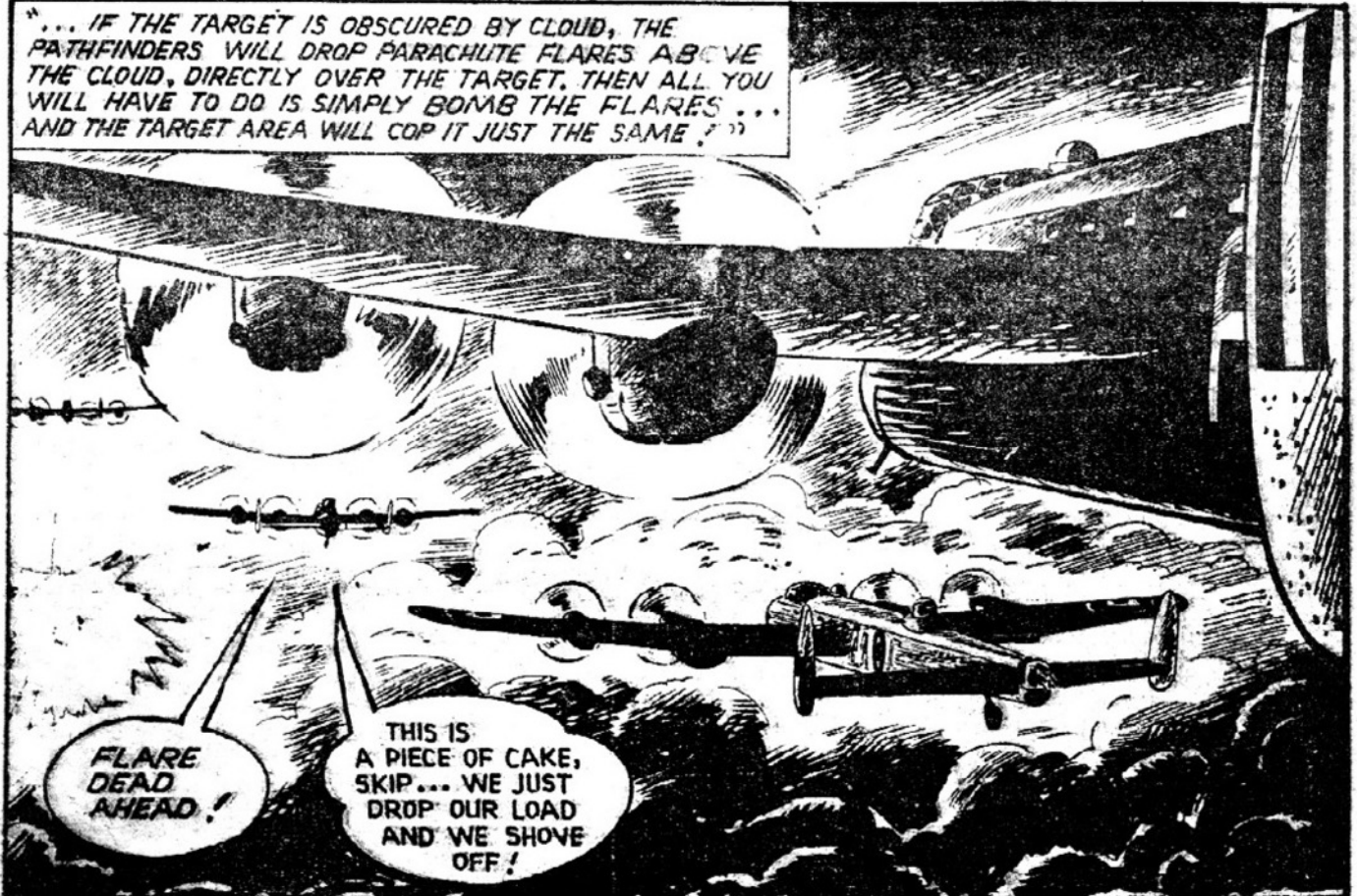
Raven Over Berlin

AND SO THE FIRST MASS RAID WITH THE NEW LANCASTERS WAS PLANNED, A CONCENTRATION OF A THOUSAND BOMBERS ON COLOGNE. WEBLEY AND HIS TEAM WENT ROUND THE SQUADRONS BEFORE-HAND HAMMERING HOME THE NEW TECHNIQUES...

THE PATHFINDERS WILL GO IN FIRST... THEY WILL DROP GREEN PHOSPHORUS MARKERS ROUND THE TARGET AREA... AND THEY WILL DROP RED TARGET INDICATORS IN THE DEAD CENTRE. NOW THIS IS THE POINT YOU MUST GET CLEAR... IF YOU CAN'T SEE THE RED, BOMB THE CENTRE OF THE CIRCLE OF GREENS!



"... IF THE TARGET IS OBSCURED BY CLOUD, THE PATHFINDERS WILL DROP PARACHUTE FLARES ABOVE THE CLOUD, DIRECTLY OVER THE TARGET. THEN ALL YOU WILL HAVE TO DO IS SIMPLY BOMB THE FLARES... AND THE TARGET AREA WILL COP IT JUST THE SAME."

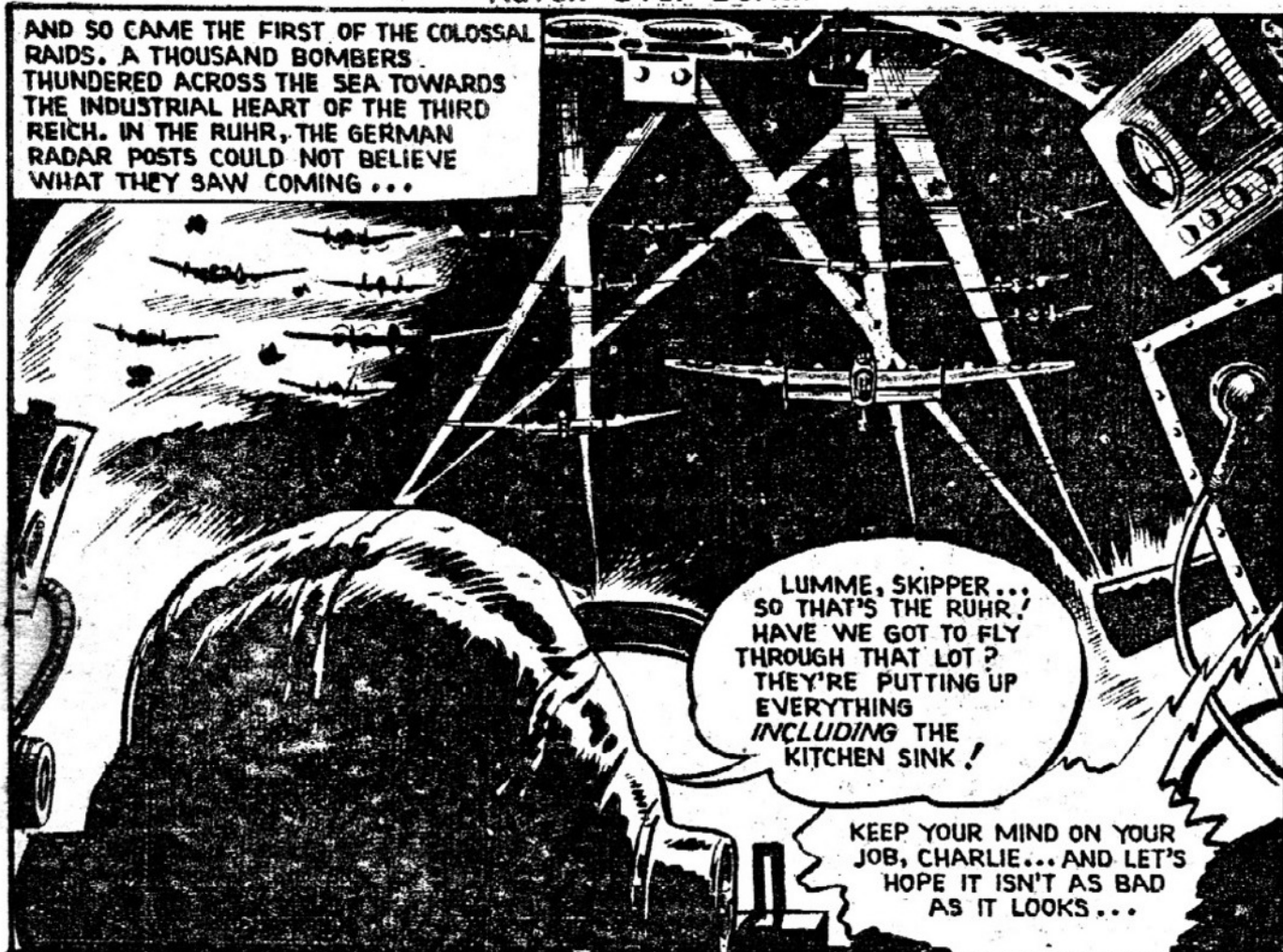


FLARE DEAD AHEAD!

THIS IS A PIECE OF CAKE, SKIP... WE JUST DROP OUR LOAD AND WE SHOVE OFF!

Raven Over Berlin

AND SO CAME THE FIRST OF THE COLOSSAL RAIDS. A THOUSAND BOMBERS THUNDERED ACROSS THE SEA TOWARDS THE INDUSTRIAL HEART OF THE THIRD REICH. IN THE RUHR, THE GERMAN RADAR POSTS COULD NOT BELIEVE WHAT THEY SAW COMING...



LUMME, SKIPPER... SO THAT'S THE RUHR! HAVE WE GOT TO FLY THROUGH THAT LOT? THEY'RE PUTTING UP EVERYTHING INCLUDING THE KITCHEN SINK!

KEEP YOUR MIND ON YOUR JOB, CHARLIE... AND LET'S HOPE IT ISN'T AS BAD AS IT LOOKS...

COLOGNE WAS POUNDED TO RUBBLE... IT WAS DAWN OVER ENGLAND WHEN THE GREAT BOMBER FORCE CAME BACK TO THE WAITING AIRFIELDS. AND AS MACHINE AFTER MACHINE ROARED IN PAST THE CONTROL TOWERS, THERE WERE WATCHERS WHO COUNTED GRIMLY.

A FOR ABLE TO CONTROL... WE'LL TRY TO MAKE IT WITHOUT MUCKING UP YOUR RUNWAY... AND BY THE WAY, THREE CASUALTIES ON BOARD...



DO YOUR BEST... WE'VE GOT X FOR XYLOPHONE CIRCLING AT ANGELS FIVE WITH SHOT-UP UNDERCART. AND O FOR ORANGE AT ANGELS TWELVE WITH AN UNEXPLODED COOKIE ABOARD, WAITING FOR HIS FUEL TO RUN OUT...

DURING THE REST OF THAT SUMMER, RAID AFTER RAID WENT OUT... AND THE DEFENCES OF THE RUHR WERE DOUBLED, AND THEN TREBLED, TO STAVE OFF THE APPALLING BLOWS TO GERMAN INDUSTRY. BUT BOMBER COMMAND'S LOSSES WERE EVEN HEAVIER THAN FEARED...

WELL, WHAT WAS IT LIKE THIS TIME, WILSON?

IT'S GRADUALLY GETTING WORSE, SIR... THE FLAK WAS LIKE A WALL, AND THE NIGHT FIGHTERS LIKE FLIES! I'M WORN OUT FLINGING THE LANC AROUND... WHAT THAT BUS NEEDS IS A LITTLE GADGET TO KEEP HER WEAVING SO THAT THE PILOT CAN TAKE IT EASY.



THE TIRED PILOT'S BANTER ABOUT "FLINGING THE LANC AROUND" SET WEBLEY THINKING. WHEN HE GOT BACK TO H.Q. HE CALLED A SPECIAL MEETING OF HIS TEAM...

I WANT AN ANALYSIS OF THE OPERATIONAL REPORTS OF ALL THE CREWS WHO MANAGED TO FINISH THEIR TOURS IN THE LAST FIVE MONTHS... AND I WANT THE RESULTS IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS!

THAT'S SOME ASSIGNMENT!

MAYBE... BUT I'M ON TO SOMETHING, AND IT COULD BE IMPORTANT!



Raven Over Berlin

BY THE FOLLOWING EVENING, ALL THE DATA WEBLEY WANTED WAS READY. HE FOUND THAT SIXTY PER CENT OF CREWS WHO HAD SURVIVED WENT INTO THEIR BOMBING RUN-UP STRAIGHT AND LEVEL.

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY FLYING STRAIGHT AND LEVEL SHOULD BE SAFER... BUT THE FIGURES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES!

YOU'LL NEVER MAKE THE CREWS BELIEVE IT, SIR!



THAT SAME NIGHT, WEBLEY WENT INTO CONFERENCE WITH AIR VICE-MARSHAL USHER AND HIS STAFF.

SO THERE IT IS, SIR, STRAIGHT AND LEVEL FLYING WILL CUT OUR LOSSES!

YOU MAY HAVE SOMETHING, WEBLEY... BUT DARE WE TAKE THE RISK OF EXPERIMENTING?

FRANKLY, SIR, I'M AGAINST WEBLEY'S IDEA. I DON'T THINK HE QUITE APPRECIATES WHAT CONDITIONS ARE LIKE IN HAPPY VALLEY THESE DAYS!

I'VE JUST COME OFF OPERATIONAL FLYING... AND I THINK THE IDEA'S RIDICULOUS!



THE TAUNTS OF THE OTHER OFFICERS AT THE CONFERENCE STUNG WEBLEY DEEPLY... FOR THE URGE TO RETURN TO OPERATIONAL FLYING HAD BEEN WITH HIM STRONGLY DURING THE PAST FEW MONTHS. WHEN THE OTHERS HAD GONE, WEBLEY TACKLED USHER... ALONE...

... WHAT THE OTHERS WERE HINTING MAY WELL BE RIGHT! IT'S POSSIBLE THAT I AM GETTING OUT OF TOUCH... SO I'M GOING TO ASK, SIR, THAT YOU LET ME GO BACK ON OPERATIONS.

IF THAT IS HOW YOU FEEL, WEBLEY, I WON'T STAND IN YOUR WAY. WE'RE DESPERATELY SHORT OF SEASONED OFFICERS ABLE TO COMMAND AND INSPIRE THEIR MEN.

SO WEBLEY WAS POSTED AS REPLACEMENT COMMANDING OFFICER TO 720 BOMBER SQUADRON... A SQUADRON THAT HAD BEEN BADLY HIT IN THE RECENT RUHR RAIDS...

HERE COMES THE NEW C.O. LET'S HOPE HE LASTS LONGER THAN THE OLD MAN.

THEY TELL ME HE'S SOME PENGUIN FROM COMMAND H.Q. ... BIG FEET AND CAN'T FLY!

GAZING ACROSS THE AIRFIELD, WEBLEY SAW THE OUTLINES OF THE GREAT BOMBERS POISED LIKE EAGLES AGAINST THE EVENING SKY...

IT'LL TAKE SOME TIME TO LEARN HOW TO HANDLE ONE OF THOSE... THAT'LL MEAN AT LEAST A WEEK BEFORE I'LL BE FIT TO MAKE AN OPERATIONAL TRIP...

Raven Over Berlin

THE WORD THAT THE NEW C.O. WAS AN AIR MINISTRY MAN HAD GONE ROUND... AND ALL THE AIRCREW WAITED TO JUDGE HIS QUALITIES... AMONG THEM A SEASONED SQUADRON-LEADER BY THE NAME OF CARVER, WHO HAD ONCE BEEN A HURRICANE FIGHTER PILOT.

ATTENTION, GENTLEMEN! THIS IS YOUR NEW COMMANDING OFFICER, WING-COMMANDER WEBLEY!

PLEASED TO MEET YOU, GENTLEMEN. PLEASE CARRY ON... I HOPE TO MEET YOU ALL PERSONALLY BEFORE BRIEFING TONIGHT!

WEBLEY...

SQUADRON-LEADER CARVER HAD NO WISH TO MEET WEBLEY, BUT AS HE CROSSED THE ROOM ON HIS WAY OUT... WEBLEY SAW HIM...

SO WE MEET AGAIN, CARVER. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN BOMBER COMMAND?

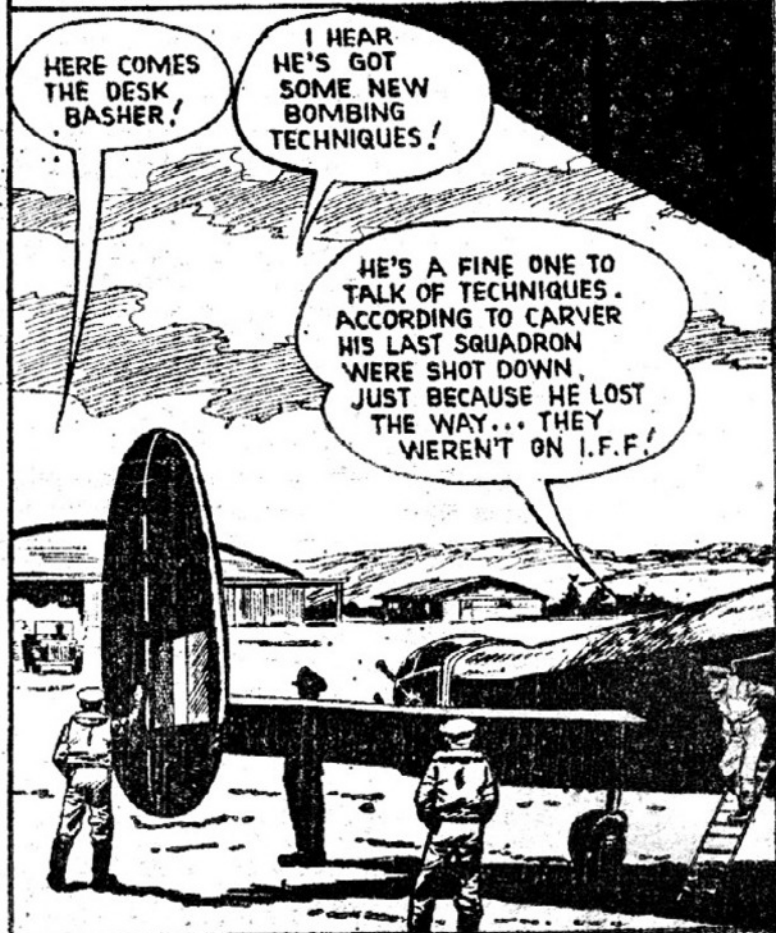
EVER SINCE THE FIASCO! I UNDERSTAND, SIR, THAT YOU HAVE BEEN CHAIRBORNE SINCE THAT TIME... WILL YOU BE FLYING WITH US?

WEBLEY DID NOT MISS CARVER'S VEILED TAUNT... BUT BAD VISIBILITY AND A TEMPORARY SHORTAGE OF AIRCRAFT DELAYED HIS SHORT TRAINING COURSE. A FORTNIGHT LATER HE STILL HAD NOT GONE ON OPERATIONS WITH HIS CREWS.

HERE COMES THE DESK BASHER!

I HEAR HE'S GOT SOME NEW BOMBING TECHNIQUES!

HE'S A FINE ONE TO TALK OF TECHNIQUES. ACCORDING TO CARVER HIS LAST SQUADRON WERE SHOT DOWN, JUST BECAUSE HE LOST THE WAY... THEY WEREN'T ON I.F.F.!





WEBLEY DECIDED THAT HE WOULD PUT HIS 'STRAIGHT-AND-LEVEL' FLYING THEORY TO HIS SQUADRON AND ASK THEM TO TEST IT FOR HIM...

WELL, THAT'S MY THEORY, GENTLEMEN... IT'S SUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE, AND I'M SURE IT'LL CUT THE CASUALTY RATE! I SHALL NOT ORDER YOU TO DO IT UNTIL I MYSELF CAN FLY WITH YOU... BUT IF, IN THE MEANTIME, YOU CHAPS COULD GIVE IT A TRY, IT WOULD SAVE VALUABLE TIME.

STRAIGHT AND LEVEL ON A SEVEN-MILE RUN-UP? HE MUST BE MAD!

IF I SAW HIM DOING IT HIMSELF, I'D STILL REFUSE. PERSONALLY, IF WE SEE HIM FLY AT ALL, I'LL BE SURPRISED!

WEBLEY SENSED THAT HIS CREWS WERE HOSTILE. LATE THAT AFTERNOON, HE WENT UP IN A LANCASTER FOR A HANDLING FLIGHT. AS THEY WERE CIRCLING BASE BEFORE LANDING...



LOOKS LIKE FILTHY WEATHER COMING, FLIGHT, I'M SO ACCUSTOMED TO THE OLD HAMPDEN THAT I STILL CAN'T GET USED TO THE FACT THAT THIS BUS CAN FLY OVER IT!

WELL, SIR, LET'S BE THANKFUL THAT WE AREN'T GOING TO ESSEN TONIGHT ... THAT'S WHAT I SAY!

ESSEN WAS THE HOTTEST TARGET IN THE RUHR. WEBLEY STOOD IN THE CONTROL TOWER, LISTENING TO THE CHRONOMETER TICK THE MINUTES AND HOURS SLOWLY AWAY.



I MAKE THEM DUE BACK IN AN HOUR... IT'S A DEVIL OF A BUSINESS HAVING TO WAIT LIKE THIS.

YES, SIR, BUT YOU'LL SOON GET USED TO IT! WE NEVER SAW MUCH OF YOUR PREDECESSOR... HE WAS USUALLY UP WITH THE BOYS. HE CLAIMED IT HELPED THEIR MORALE.

A FEW MINUTES LATER THE SILENCE OF THE CONTROL TOWER WAS SUDDENLY BROKEN. A PILOT WAS TALKING ... AND HE HAD OBVIOUSLY FORGOTTEN TO TURN HIS RADIO TO 'RECEIVE', AND IT WAS STILL ON 'TRANSMIT'...

... LOOKS AS IF WE'RE OUT OF TROUBLE NOW, BOYS. SWITCH ON I.F.F., WIRELESS OP... WE DON'T WANT TO COMMIT THE SAME STUPID BLUNDER AS OUR BRAVE CHAIRBORNE C.O....

THAT'S CARVER!



UNAWARE THAT HIS WORDS WERE BEING PICKED UP BY HIS OWN CONTROL TOWER AND PROBABLY THE GERMANS, CARVER RAMBLED CHEERFULLY ON.

IF YOU ASK ME HIS NERVE HAS GONE... HE LACKS MORAL FIBRE.

STILL... FLYING STRAIGHT AND LEVEL ON THE RUN-UP DID WORK!

YES... IT WORKED THIS TIME! BUT WILL IT WORK NEXT TIME? I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED...



THE LANCASTERS THUNDERED ON TOWARDS THE ENGLISH COAST, AND UNWITTINGLY, CARVER CONTINUED TO BROADCAST HIS OPINION OF HIS C.O.

... HE MAY BE RIGHT ABOUT HIS STRAIGHT AND LEVEL THEORY, BUT AS A PILOT AND AS A C.O. HE ISN'T THE TYPE ... HE'S THE DESK TYPE ... BAH!



IN THE FLYING CONTROL TOWER, WEBLEY LISTENED GRIMLY. WITH A DESPERATE SMILE, THE FLYING CONTROL OFFICER DID HIS BEST TO SAY SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE AND HELPFUL....

CARVER HAS STUCK HIS NECK OUT TOO FAR THIS TIME...

WELL, SIR, I THINK THAT PROVES IT! YOUR STRAIGHT AND LEVEL IDEA SEEMS TO WORK...

DON'T SOFT-PEDAL ME, CONTROL... YOU HEARD WHAT HE SAID AS WELL AS I DID. BUT THAT'S NOT VERY IMPORTANT... WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT HE HAS JUST BROADCAST OUR FLYING TACTICS TO THE GERMAN MONITOR SERVICES...

AND IT WAS THEN THAT CARVER'S FLIGHT ENGINEER HAPPENED TO NOTICE THE POSITION OF THE R.T. BUTTON.

SKIPPER... THE R.T.'S ON TRANSMIT!

GREAT SCOTT! EVERYTHING I'VE SAID WILL HAVE BEEN PICKED UP BY CONTROL... NOT TO MENTION THE OLD MAN, WHO PRACTICALLY LIVES THERE NOWADAYS!

AS CARVER'S VOICE CUT OFF IN MID-SENTENCE, WEBLEY TURNED CURTLY AWAY FROM THE FLYING CONTROL OFFICER.

THAT WAS RATHER A BAD SHOW, SIR... AND I'M AFRAID I DIDN'T RECOGNISE THE VOICE!

I RECOGNISED THE VOICE! I HAPPEN TO KNOW IT RATHER WELL! SEND SQUADRON-LEADER CARVER TO ME AS SOON AS HE HAS BEEN DE-BRIEFED...

WEBLEY LEFT THE BRIEFING ROOM, AND WAITED WITH PENT-UP ANGER IN HIS OWN OFFICE FOR CARVER TO APPEAR. HE WAS NOT LONG IN COMING.



THIS IS MY OPINION OF YOU, CARVER... YOU'VE COVERED UP YOUR MISTAKE OF SHOOTING DOWN YOUR OWN SIDE BY BUILDING UP A RESENTMENT AGAINST ME! YOU VOICE THAT RESENTMENT RECKLESSLY... EVEN OVER YOUR OWN R.T. YOU TOLD THE GERMANS EVERYTHING THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OUR RAIDING TACTICS! GIVE ME ANY MORE TROUBLE AND I'LL HAVE YOU COURT-MARTIALED! NOW... GET OUT!

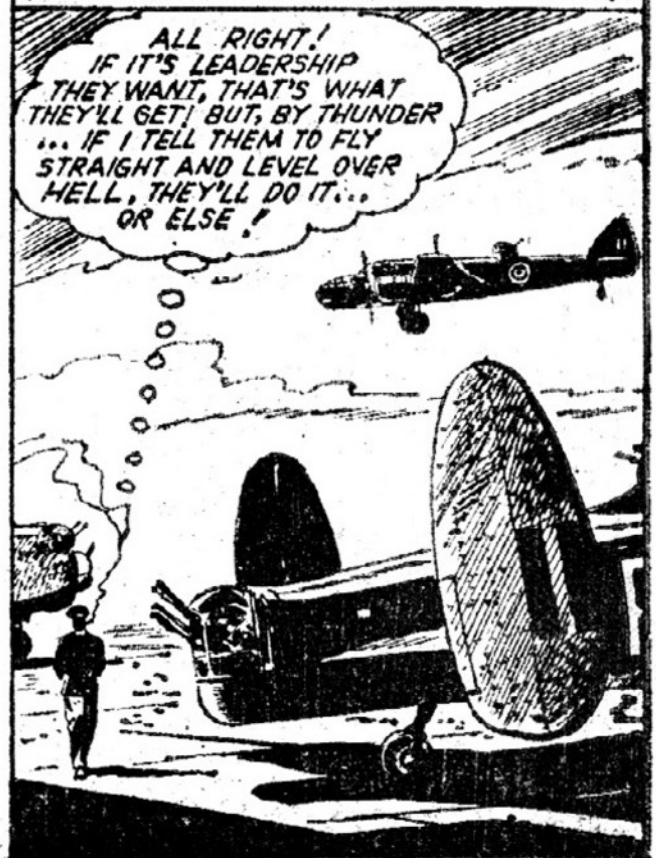
BUT CARVER, ALTHOUGH SHAKEN, WAS NOT COWED BY WEBLEY'S OUTBURST...

ALL RIGHT, SIR... I'M ON MY WAY! BUT WE EXPECT OUR C.O. TO FLY WITH US, INSTEAD OF ASKING US TO MAKE DANGEROUS EXPERIMENTS WHILE HE SITS COMFORTABLY IN FLYING CONTROL. BREAK ME IF YOU LIKE, BUT THAT'S MY OPINION OF YOU, SIR...



WEBLEY WALKED OUT ON TO THE AIRFIELD TO COOL OFF. WAS CARVER RIGHT? HAD HE TURNED YELLOW... WAS HE MAKING AN EXCUSE OF THE FACT THAT HE HAD NOT DONE ENOUGH FLYING IN LANCASTERS?

ALL RIGHT! IF IT'S LEADERSHIP THEY WANT, THAT'S WHAT THEY'LL GET! BUT, BY THUNDER... IF I TELL THEM TO FLY STRAIGHT AND LEVEL OVER HELL, THEY'LL DO IT... OR ELSE!



Raven Over Berlin

HALF AN HOUR LATER, CARVER BROUGHT HIS LANCASTER OVER THE AIRFIELD ...

HERE COMES THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN VOICE!

ZERO BOOST ...
FLAPS DOWN ...
WATCH THOSE REVS NOW, ENGINEER!

WEBLEY STOOD LISTENING TO CARVER AND HIS CREW BEING DE-BRIEFED. DESPITE HIS ANGER HE LISTENED INTENTLY TO CARVER'S REPORT ...

YES! THE CURIOUS THING WAS THE FLAK NEVER CAME NEAR US AND NEITHER DID THE SEARCHLIGHTS! IT MAY BE COINCIDENCE OR LUCK ...

LET'S GET THIS CLEAR ... YOU DID A SEVEN MILE RUN-UP DEAD STRAIGHT AND LEVEL?



Chapter 3.

SUICIDE MISSION

THE NEXT AFTERNOON, ALL CREWS WERE ORDERED TO THE BRIEFING ROOM. EVERYONE SENSED THAT TROUBLE WAS BREWING.

WE SHALL BE OPERATING TONIGHT... AND I SHALL BE FLYING WITH YOU! I UNDERSTAND THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME DISSATISFACTION BECAUSE I HAVE NOT SO FAR ACCOMPANIED YOU! THAT IS UNDERSTANDABLE! THERE IS ANOTHER MATTER I MUST TOUCH UPON...



WEBLEY WENT ON TO RECOUNT, IN CURT AND GRIM DETAIL, THE TRAGIC DISASTER OF THE HAMPDEN SQUADRON AND HIS ORIGINAL REASONS FOR GOING TO THE AIR MINISTRY.



THERE'S NOT MUCH OF A MORAL IN THAT STORY... EXCEPT, POSSIBLY, THAT IT IS VERY EASY TO MAKE MISTAKES IN THE AIR AND THE RESULTS OF SUCH MISTAKES ARE SWIFT AND DEVASTATING. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER... AND MAKE DARNED SURE THAT MISTAKES DO NOT OCCUR!

HE THEN DISCLOSED THAT, HOWEVER WELL MARKED THE TARGET, BOMBS STILL TENDED TO FALL SHORT.

I HAVE A SCHEME IN MIND WHICH MAY PREVENT THIS. WE WILL BE THE FIRST SQUADRON TO TRY OUT A NEW AND REVOLUTIONARY SYSTEM...



WONDER WHAT HE'LL SUGGEST NOW?

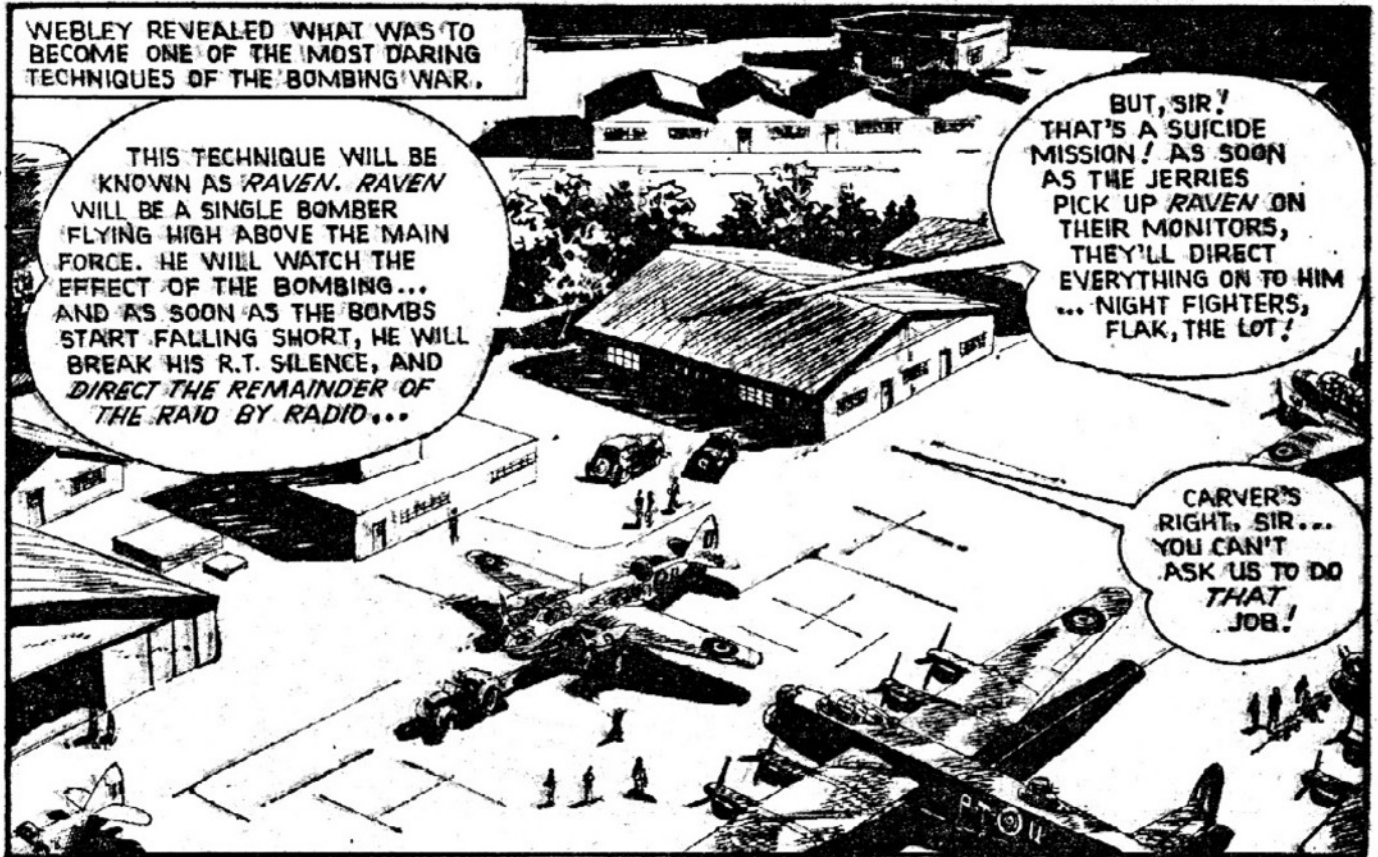
EXPECT HE'LL WANT US TO GO DOWN UNTIL WE SEE THE WHITES OF THEIR EYES...

WEBLEY REVEALED WHAT WAS TO BECOME ONE OF THE MOST DARING TECHNIQUES OF THE BOMBING WAR.

THIS TECHNIQUE WILL BE KNOWN AS *RAVEN*. *RAVEN* WILL BE A SINGLE BOMBER FLYING HIGH ABOVE THE MAIN FORCE. HE WILL WATCH THE EFFECT OF THE BOMBING... AND AS SOON AS THE BOMBS START FALLING SHORT, HE WILL BREAK HIS R.T. SILENCE, AND DIRECT THE REMAINDER OF THE RAID BY RADIO...

BUT, SIR! THAT'S A SUICIDE MISSION! AS SOON AS THE JERRIES PICK UP *RAVEN* ON THEIR MONITORS, THEY'LL DIRECT EVERYTHING ON TO HIM... NIGHT FIGHTERS, FLAK, THE LOT!

CARVER'S RIGHT, SIR... YOU CAN'T ASK US TO DO THAT JOB!

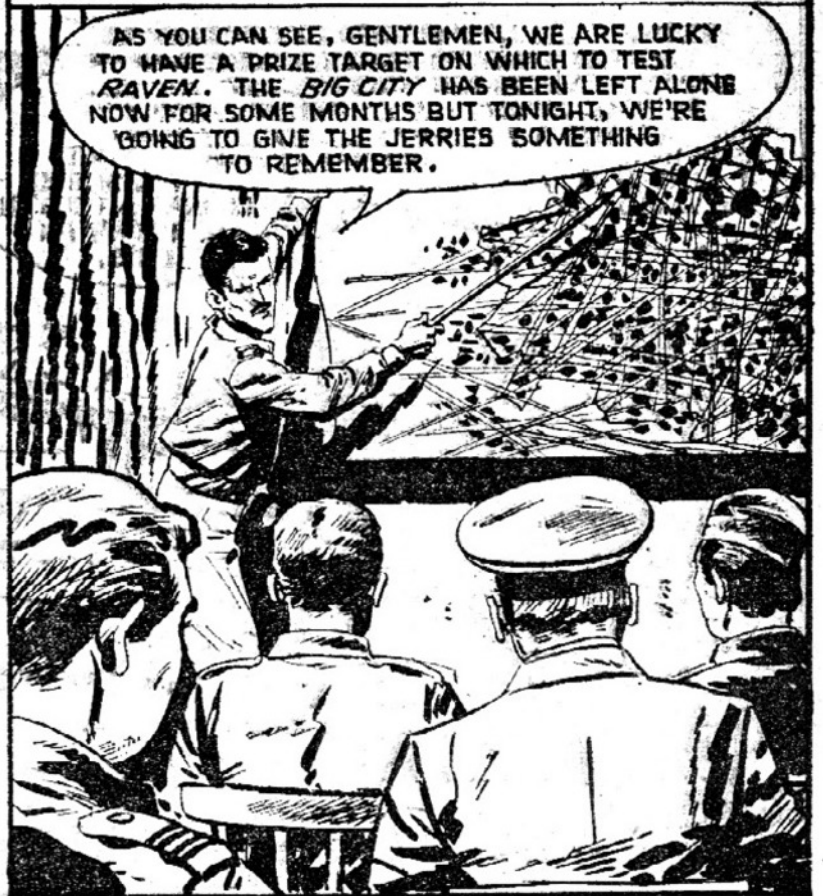


THERE'S ONE LAST POINT I THINK I SHOULD MAKE CLEAR... I WILL BE *RAVEN*!



AS WEBLEY PUSHED BACK THE CLOTH COVERING THE TARGET MAP, A BUZZ OF EXCITEMENT ROSE FROM THE ASSEMBLED CREWS. THE TARGET WAS *BERLIN*!

AS YOU CAN SEE, GENTLEMEN, WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE A PRIZE TARGET ON WHICH TO TEST *RAVEN*. THE *BIG CITY* HAS BEEN LEFT ALONE NOW FOR SOME MONTHS BUT TONIGHT, WE'RE GOING TO GIVE THE JERRIES SOMETHING TO REMEMBER.



Raven Over Berlin



WHEN WEBLEY PUT IT THAT WAY, THERE WAS NO BACKING OUT. THE SUN WAS SETTING OVER THE LINCOLN WOLDS AS THE CREW BUS DISGORGED AIRCREWS NEAR THE MARSHALLED LANCASTERS.



ALTHOUGH HE WAS OUTWARDLY CONFIDENT, WEBLEY REALISED THE DANGER INTO WHICH HE WAS LEADING HIS CREW... AND HE KNEW THAT EVERY OUNCE OF SKILL AT HIS COMMAND WOULD BE NEEDED TO BRING THEM SAFELY HOME.

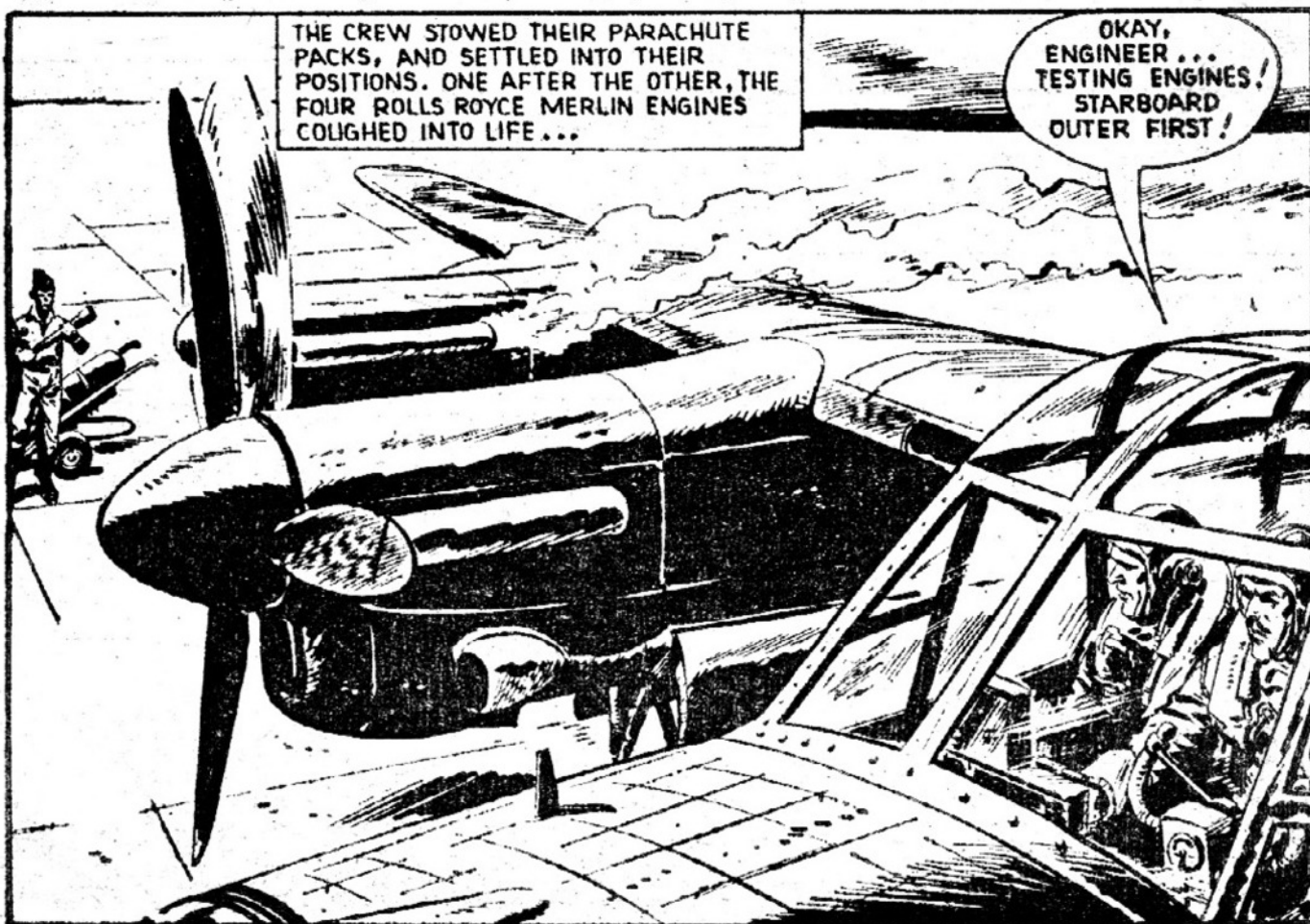
COME ON, CHAPS... WE TAKE OFF IN FIFTEEN MINUTES! GET YOURSELVES SETTLED IN!

BOOK YOUR SEATS TO BERLIN NOW...



THE CREW STOWED THEIR PARACHUTE PACKS, AND SETTLED INTO THEIR POSITIONS. ONE AFTER THE OTHER, THE FOUR ROLLS ROYCE MERLIN ENGINES COUGHED INTO LIFE...

OKAY, ENGINEER... TESTING ENGINES! STARBOARD OUTER FIRST!



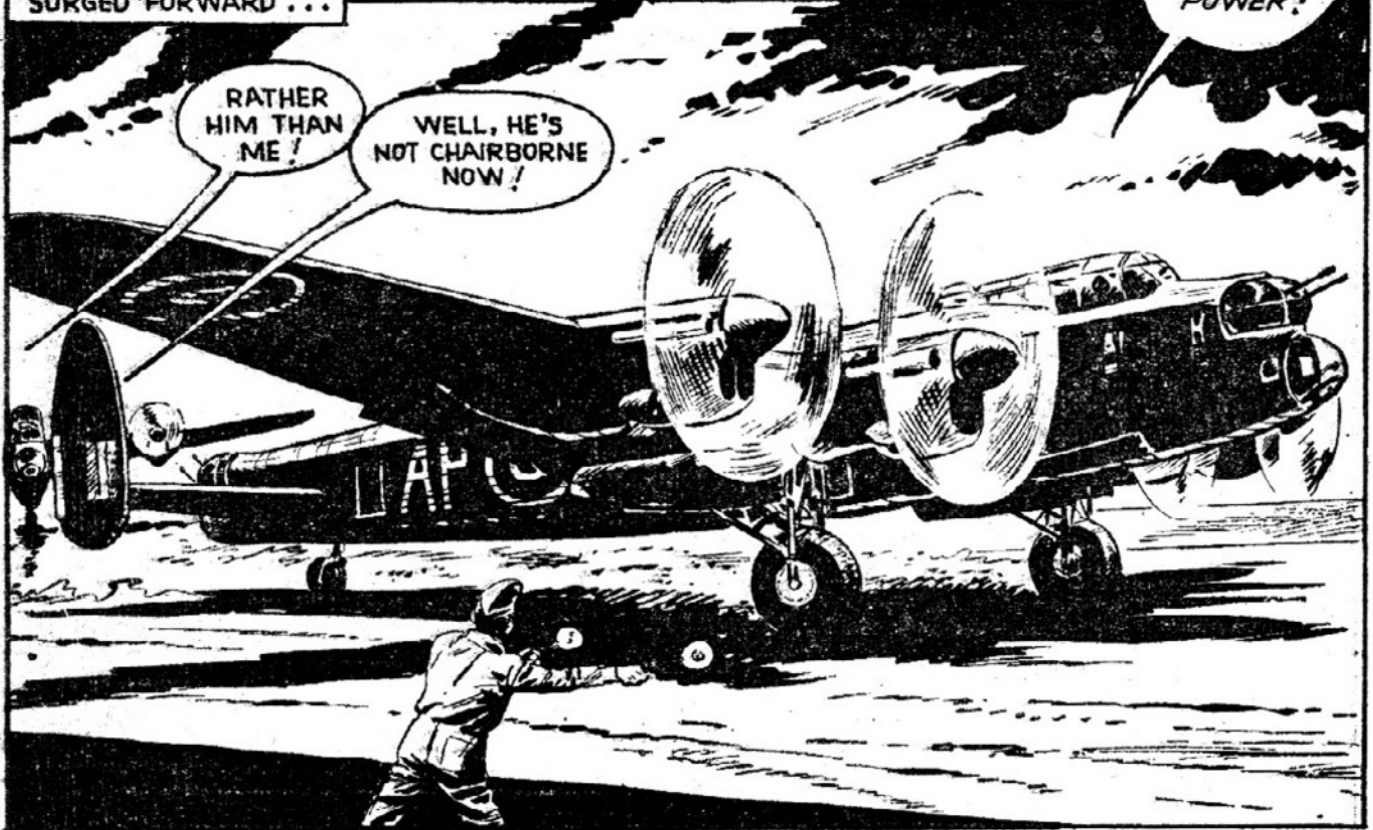
Raven Over Berlin

WEBLEY LED THE SQUADRON IN LINE AS THEY TAXIED ROUND THE PERIMETER TRACK TO THE RUNWAY FOR TAKE-OFF. THE ENGINEER OPENED THE THROTTLES WHILE WEBLEY HELD THE BRAKES... THE LANCASTER VIBRATED AND STRUGGLED LIKE A CAGED BEAST AS THE ENGINE NOTE ROSE TO A DEAFENING CLIMAX. THEN WEBLEY RELEASED THE BRAKES, AND THEY SURGED FORWARD...

OKAY,
ENGINEER...
FULL
POWER!

RATHER
HIM THAN
ME!

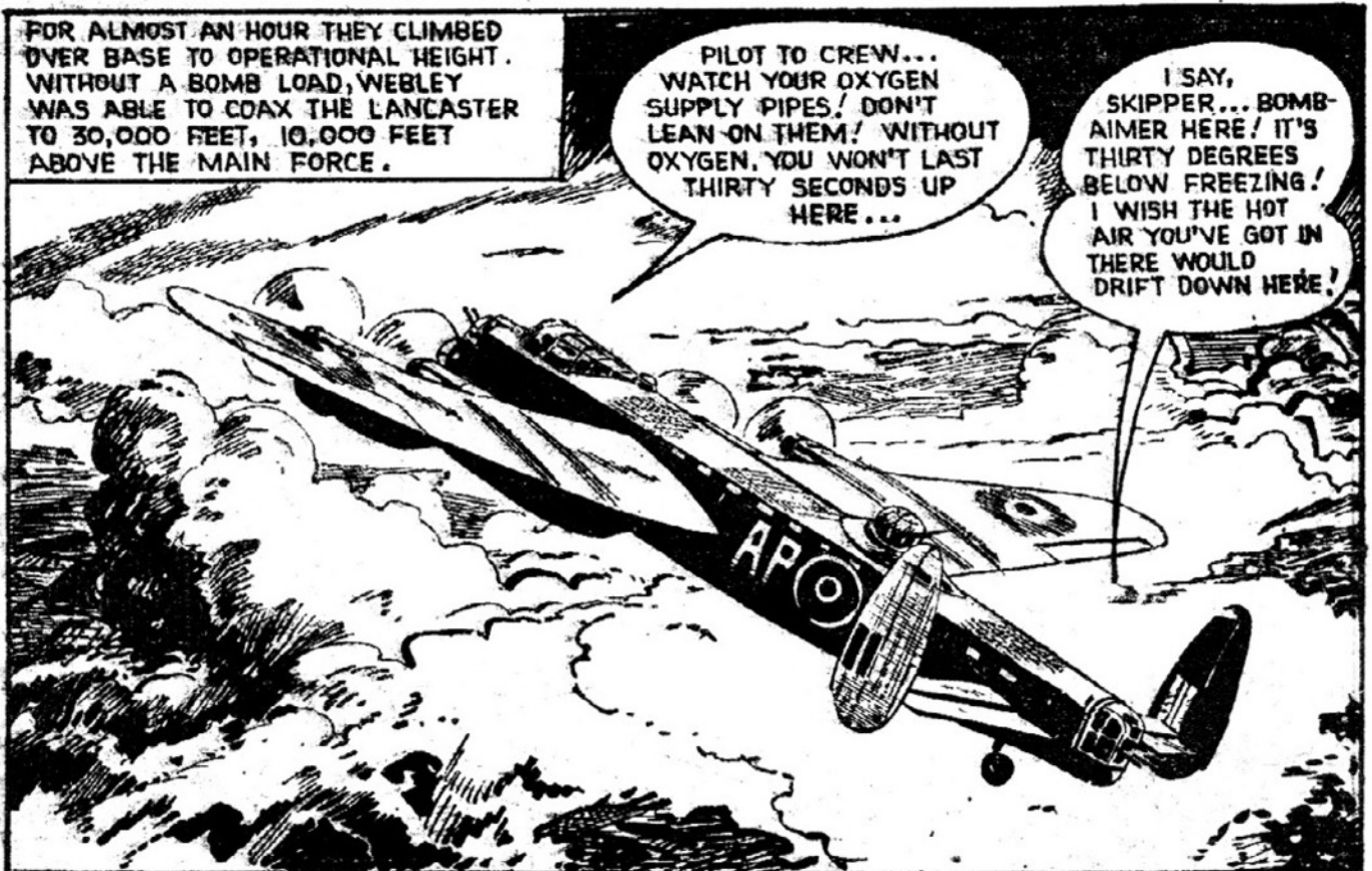
WELL, HE'S
NOT CHAIRBORNE
NOW!



FOR ALMOST AN HOUR THEY CLIMBED OVER BASE TO OPERATIONAL HEIGHT. WITHOUT A BOMB LOAD, WEBLEY WAS ABLE TO COAX THE LANCASTER TO 30,000 FEET, 10,000 FEET ABOVE THE MAIN FORCE.

PILOT TO CREW...
WATCH YOUR OXYGEN
SUPPLY PIPES! DON'T
LEAN ON THEM! WITHOUT
OXYGEN, YOU WON'T LAST
THIRTY SECONDS UP
HERE...

I SAY,
SKIPPER... BOMB-
AIMER HERE! IT'S
THIRTY DEGREES
BELOW FREEZING!
I WISH THE HOT
AIR YOU'VE GOT IN
THERE WOULD
DRIFT DOWN HERE!



AIRCRAFT FROM ALL SQUADRONS IN BOMBER COMMAND GATHERED THAT NIGHT...THEIR DESTINATION, BERLIN. FAR ABOVE THE MIGHTY ARMADA, WEBLEY'S SOLITARY LANCASTER MADE ITS OWN COURSE...

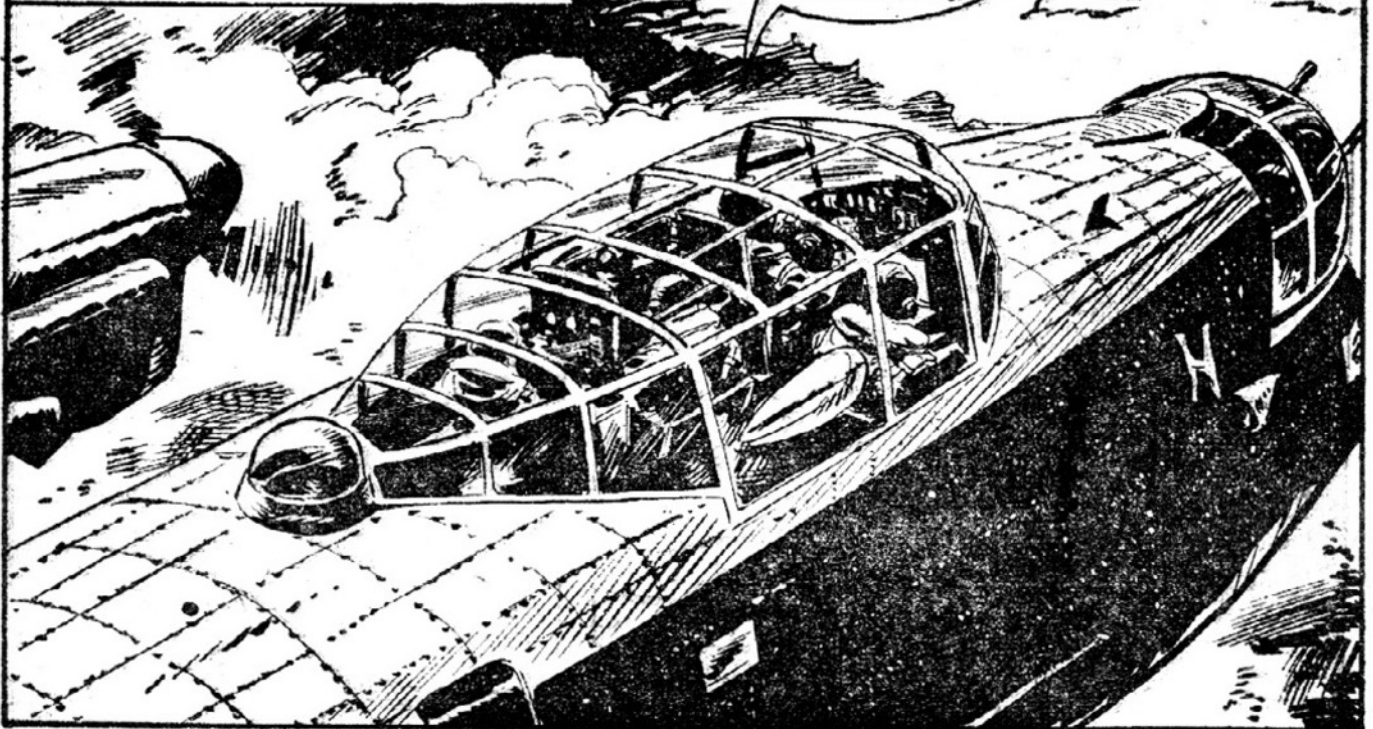
SET COURSE O-FOUR-SEVEN DEGREES IN PRECISELY FOUR AND A HALF MINUTES FROM...NOW!

CHECK... COURSE O-FOUR SEVEN DEGREES...



IN THE BLACK, VELVETY DARKNESS, THE LINE OF THE ENEMY COAST WAS NOT VISIBLE UNTIL TWO NERVOUS COASTAL FLAK BATTERIES FLICKERED BRIEFLY FAR BELOW

ENEMY COAST AHEAD... KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR FIGHTERS!



Raven Over Berlin

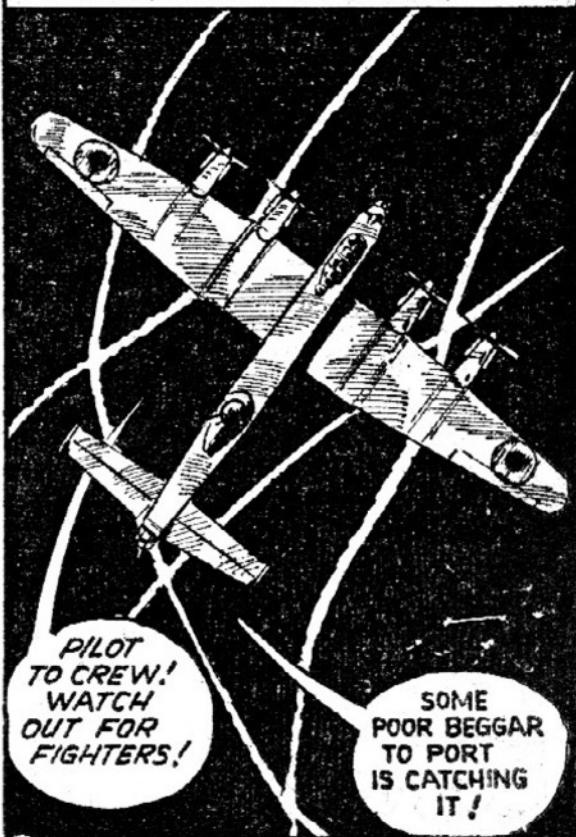
BUT THE EVER-WATCHING EYES OF GERMAN RADAR HAD LONG SINCE PICKED UP THE APPROACHING BOMBERS... AND URGENT ORDERS PASSED TO THE FLAK BATTERIES...

GOOD... GOOD! ONE, TWO, THREE! WE HAVE SHOT DOWN THREE TERROR FLIERS!

CONTROL REPORTS SIX MORE WAVES TO COME, ON THE SAME COURSE! ONE BOMBER IS VERY HIGH ABOVE THEM AT TEN THOUSAND METRES!

BUT THE LONE BOMBER HIGH ABOVE THE MAIN FORCE WAS NOT DEEMED IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO DRAW THE FIRE OF THE BATTERIES. GERMANY'S CRACK NIGHT FIGHTER ACES SCRAMBLED FROM THE WARMTH OF THEIR MESS TO THE COLD, IMPLACABLE WAR ABOVE THEM.

WEBLEY AND HIS CREW WERE ABLE TO OBSERVE THE THREADS OF VAPOUR TRAILS CRISS-CROSSING BENEATH THEM... THE TRAILS OF THE HUNTER AND OF THE HUNTED. THE NIGHT FIGHTERS WERE OUT FOR BLOOD...



PILOT TO CREW! WATCH OUT FOR FIGHTERS!

SOME POOR BEGGAR TO PORT IS CATCHING IT!

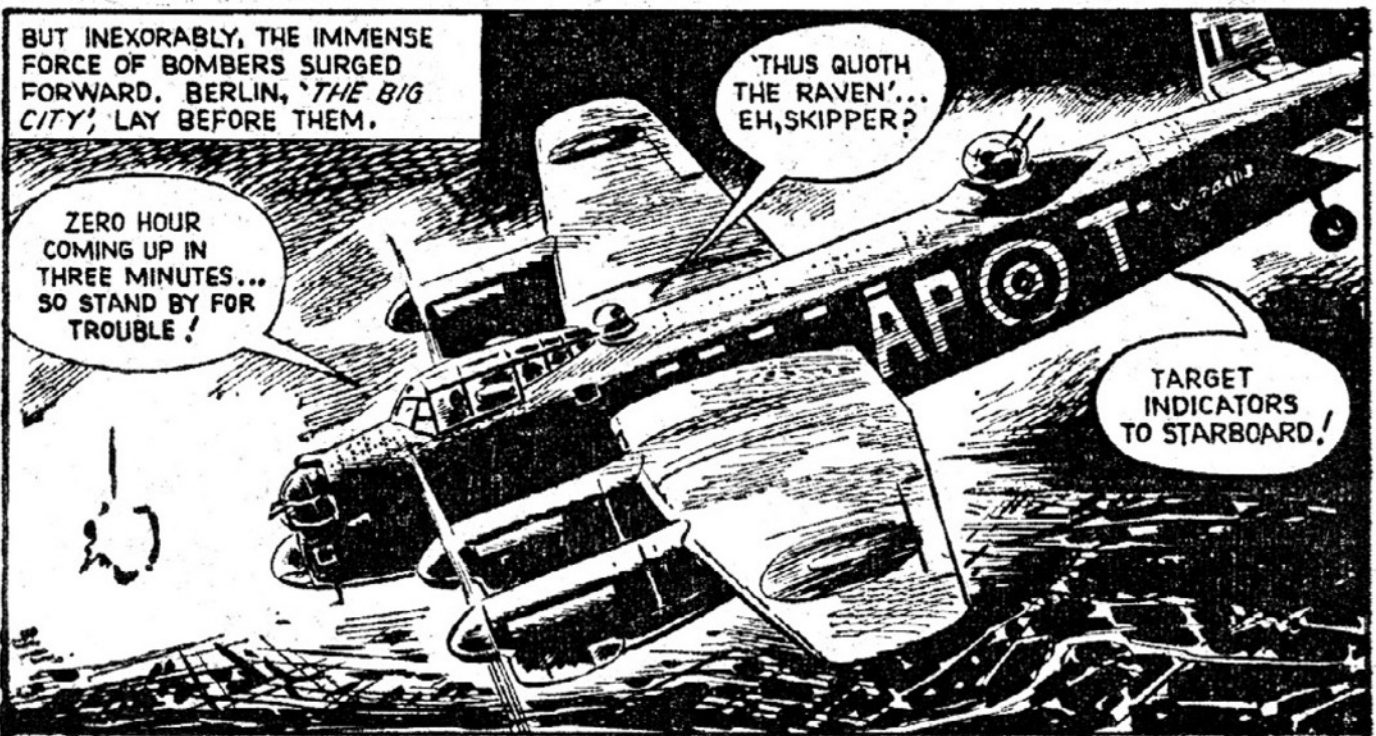
DOWN AMONG THE MAIN FORCE, THE BOMBER PILOTS SWEATED AND GASPED WITH THE EXERTION AS THEY FLUNG THEIR LADEN AIRCRAFT ABOUT THE SKY IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ESCAPE THE RELENTLESS ATTACK OF THE NIGHT FIGHTERS.



FIGHTER, FIGHTER! PORT QUARTER... NINE HUNDRED YARDS!

GOT HIM, SKIPPER! HE'S HIT!

BUT INEXORABLY, THE IMMENSE FORCE OF BOMBERS SURGED FORWARD. BERLIN, 'THE BIG CITY', LAY BEFORE THEM.



ZERO HOUR COMING UP IN THREE MINUTES... SO STAND BY FOR TROUBLE!

'THUS QUOTH THE RAVEN'... EH, SKIPPER?

TARGET INDICATORS TO STARBOARD!

THE FIRST OF THE RED TARGET INDICATORS CASCADED INTO THE HEART OF THE WAITING CITY. FAR BELOW, THE PATHFINDERS HAD BEGUN THEIR TASK...

OKAY, SIR...
TURN ON
O-THREE-FIVE!

TURNING ON! I WONDER
IF THIS RAVEN JOKER WILL
TRY HIS TRICKS ON US IF
WE MAKE A DUFF RUN...

AS THE FIRST WAVE OF BOMBERS MOVED IN TOWARDS THE GLARE OF THE RED TARGET INDICATOR, THE WEAVING PATHFINDERS' GREEN FLARES SETTLED DOWN AROUND THE PERIMETER OF THE TARGET. FROM HIS RAVEN'S PERCH HIGH ABOVE THE ACTION, WEBLEY LOOKED DOWN ON THE GRIM AND SPECTACULAR SIGHT...

KEEP YOUR EYES ON
THE TARGET AREA,
LADS... THE PARTY
HAS STARTED!

AS THEY RAN UP TOWARDS THE MARKERS, THE FIRST BOMBERS OF THE GREAT WAVE UNLOADED THEIR MIXED CARGOES WITH DEADLY PRECISION...

COOKIE AWAY, SIR!

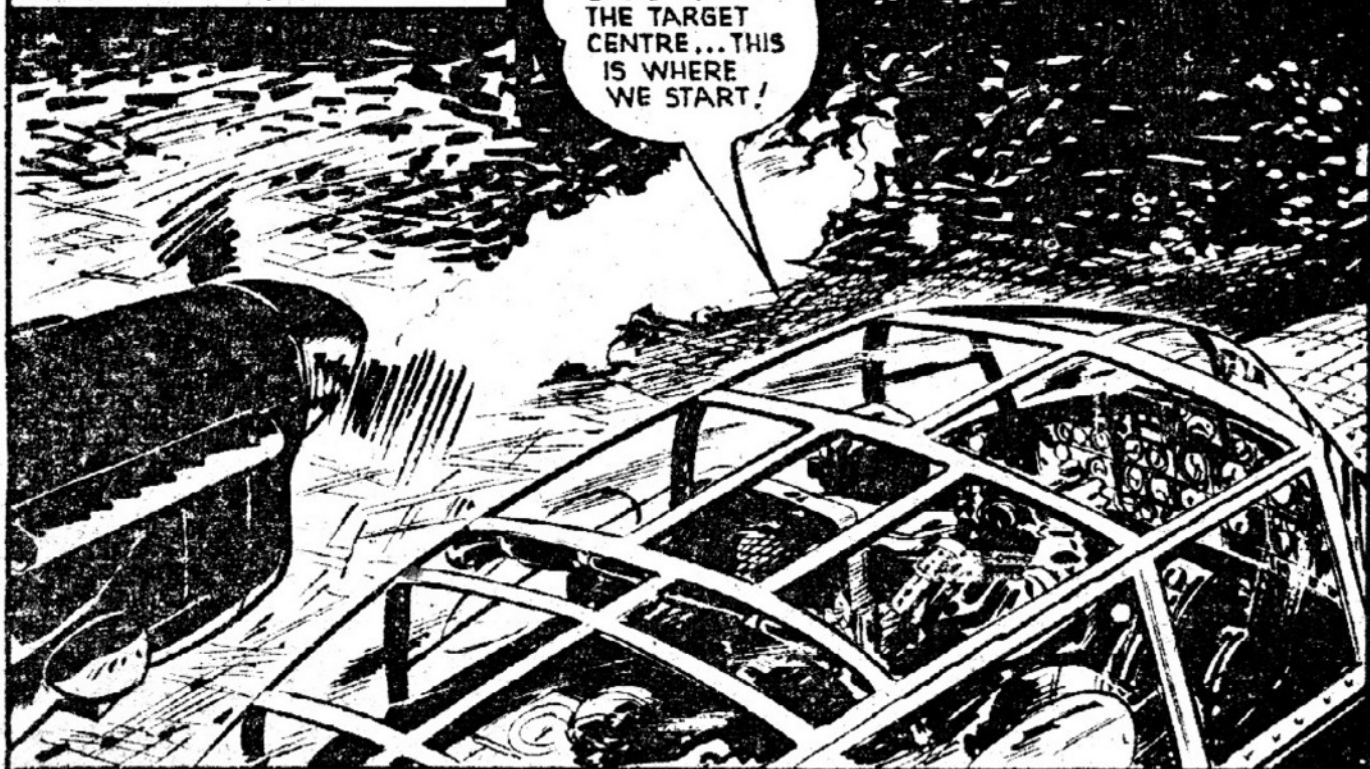
THEN LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

THE TARGET CENTRE WAS A VAST PATCH OF PHOSPHORESCENCE, TWO HUNDRED YARDS ACROSS. INTO IT, LIKE THE CRACK OF DOOM, FELL THE FIRST OF THE HIGH-VELOCITY BLOCK-BUSTERS...



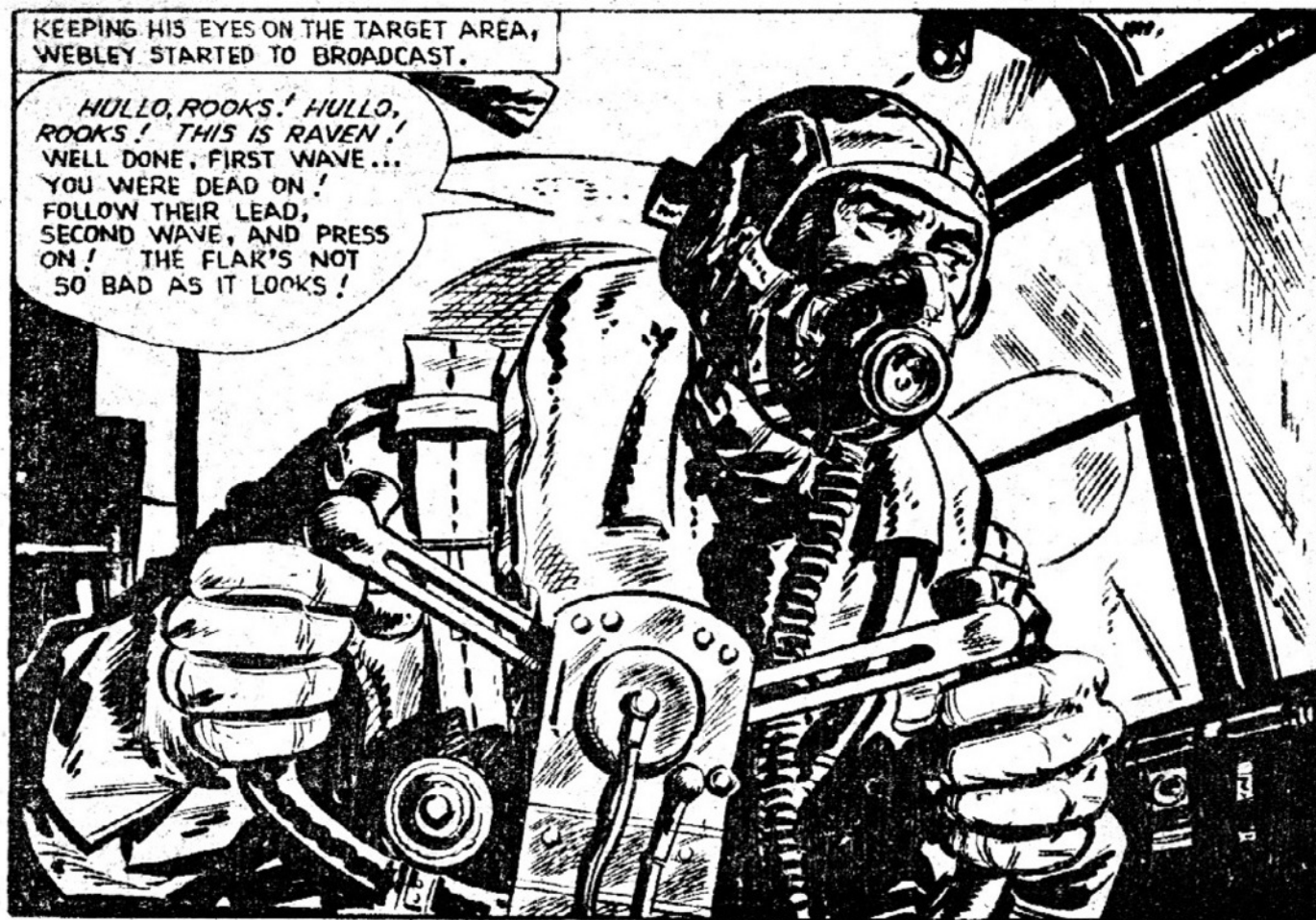
TO WEBLEY, IN HIS HIGH EYRIE,
THE APPALLING EXPLOSIONS WERE
MERE, TINY, WINKING FLASHES
OF BLUE AND WHITE.

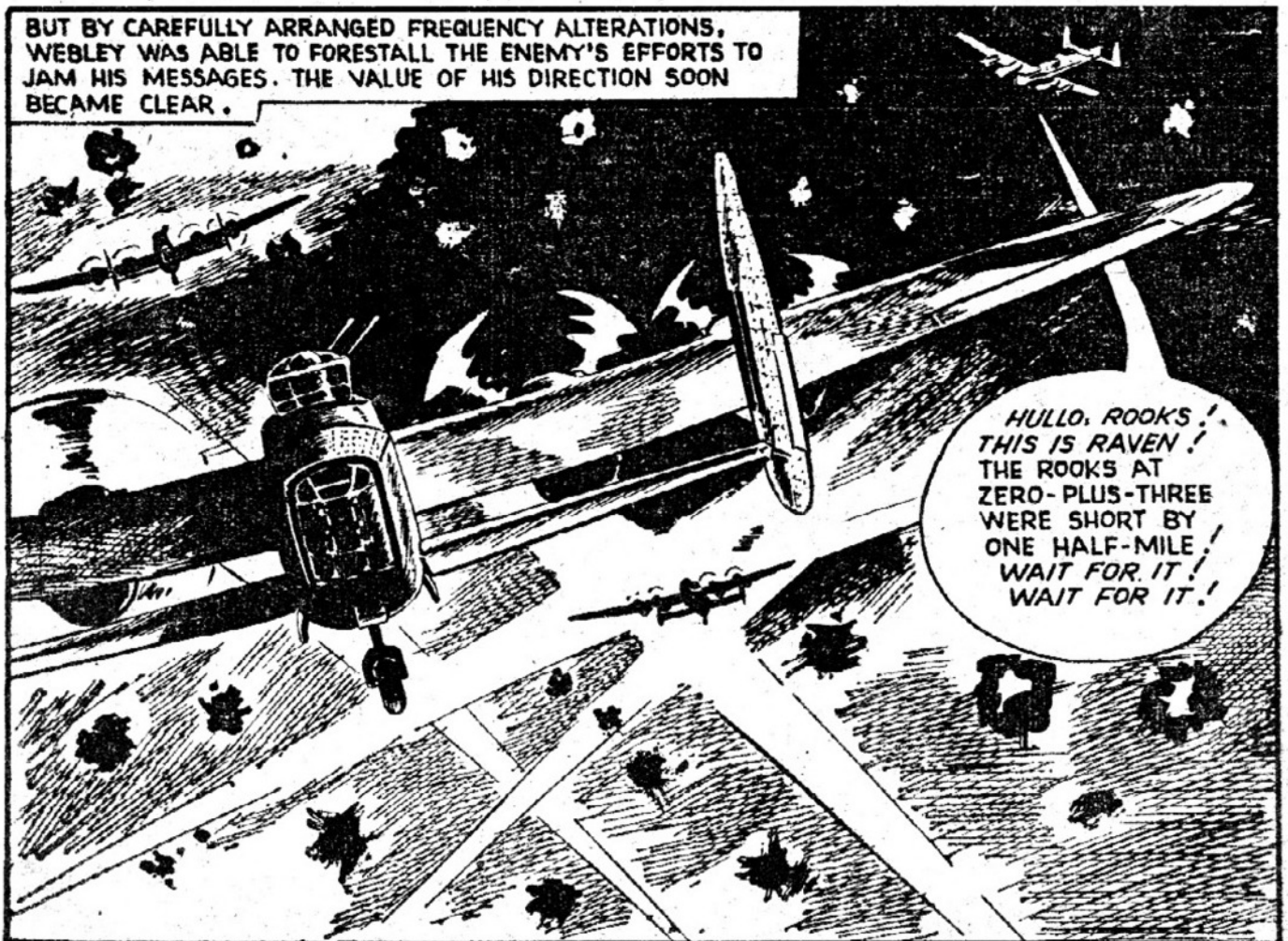
THOSE FIRST
STICKS WERE
BANG ON
THE TARGET
CENTRE... THIS
IS WHERE
WE START!



KEEPING HIS EYES ON THE TARGET AREA,
WEBLEY STARTED TO BROADCAST.

HULLO, ROOKS! HULLO,
ROOKS! THIS IS RAVEN!
WELL DONE, FIRST WAVE...
YOU WERE DEAD ON!
FOLLOW THEIR LEAD,
SECOND WAVE, AND PRESS
ON! THE FLAK'S NOT
SO BAD AS IT LOOKS!

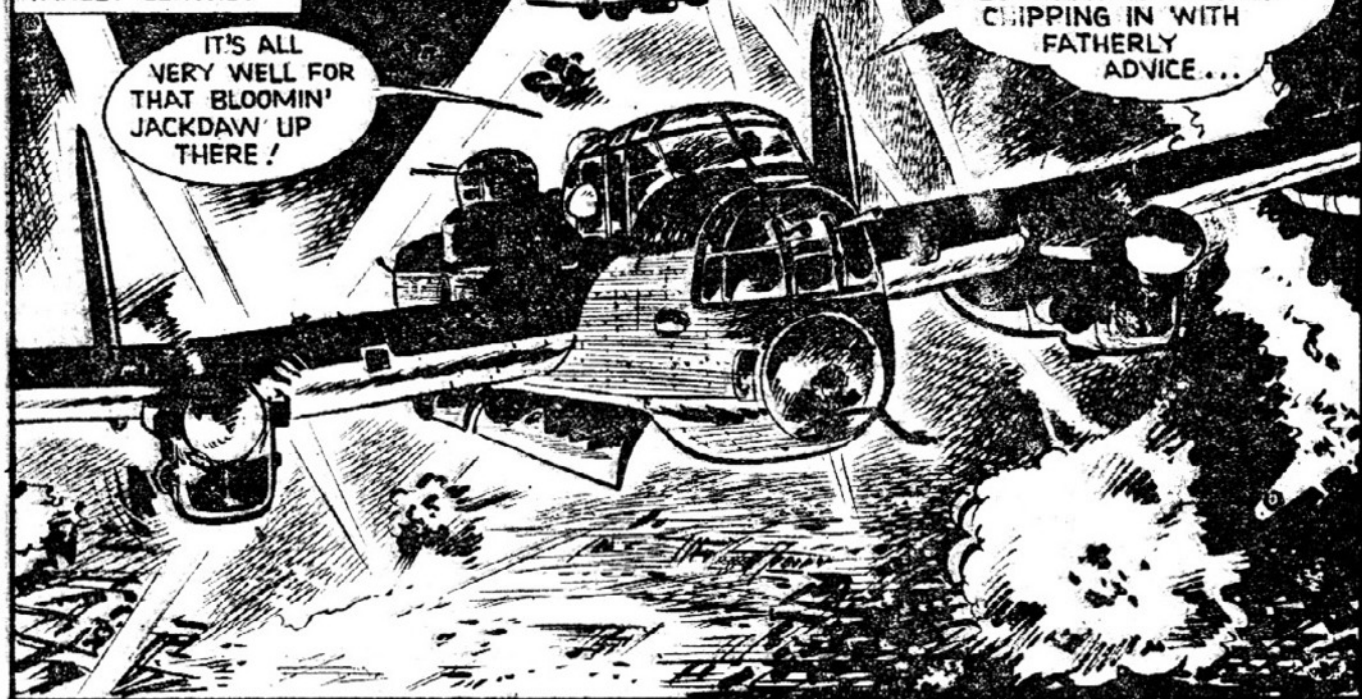




THE CALM, UNHURRIED VOICE OF RAVEN SOMEHOW GAVE THE BOMBER CREWS ADDED COURAGE TO BRING THEIR MIGHTY MACHINES IN ACCURATELY TOWARDS THE TARGET CENTRE.

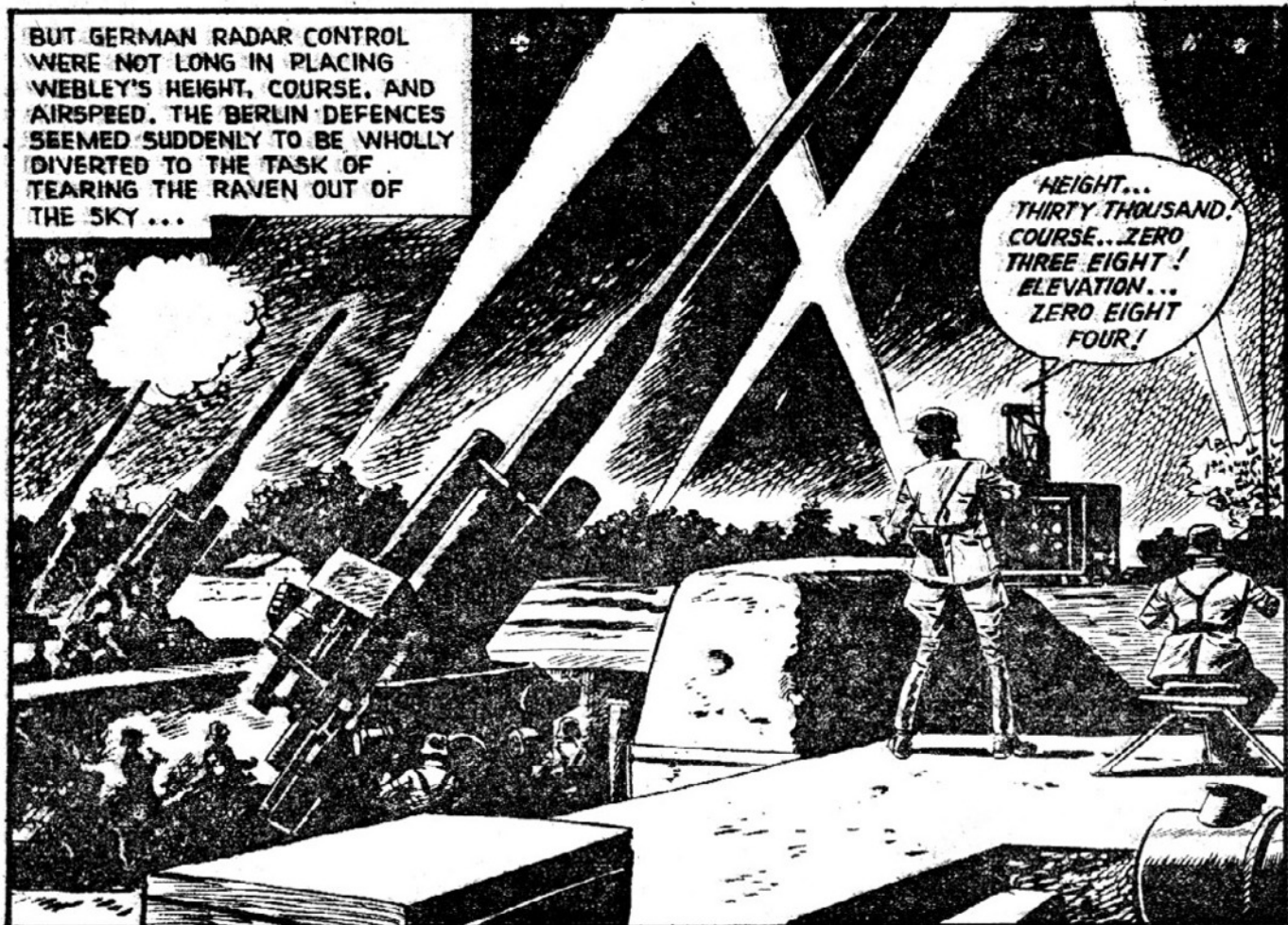
IT'S ALL VERY WELL FOR THAT BLOOMIN' JACKDAW UP THERE!

BROTHER... YOU'RE WRONG THERE! IF YOU WERE BEHIND THESE CONTROLS YOU'D FIND SOMETHING STEADYING ABOUT HAVING A JOKER CHIPPING IN WITH FATHERLY ADVICE...



BUT GERMAN RADAR CONTROL WERE NOT LONG IN PLACING WEBLEY'S HEIGHT, COURSE, AND AIRSPEED. THE BERLIN DEFENCES SEEMED SUDDENLY TO BE WHOLLY DIVERTED TO THE TASK OF TEARING THE RAVEN OUT OF THE SKY...

HEIGHT... THIRTY THOUSAND! COURSE... ZERO THREE EIGHT! ELEVATION... ZERO EIGHT FOUR!



THE FLAK BARRAGES STUDDED THE SKY AROUND WEBLEY'S LANCASTER AND THE AIRFRAME OF THE HUGE MACHINE SHUDDERED AT NEAR BURSTS ...

HULLO, ROOKS... RAVEN CALLING! I'M HAVING A SPOT OF BOTHER... WILL CALL YOU AGAIN WHEN IT'S BEEN SORTED OUT!

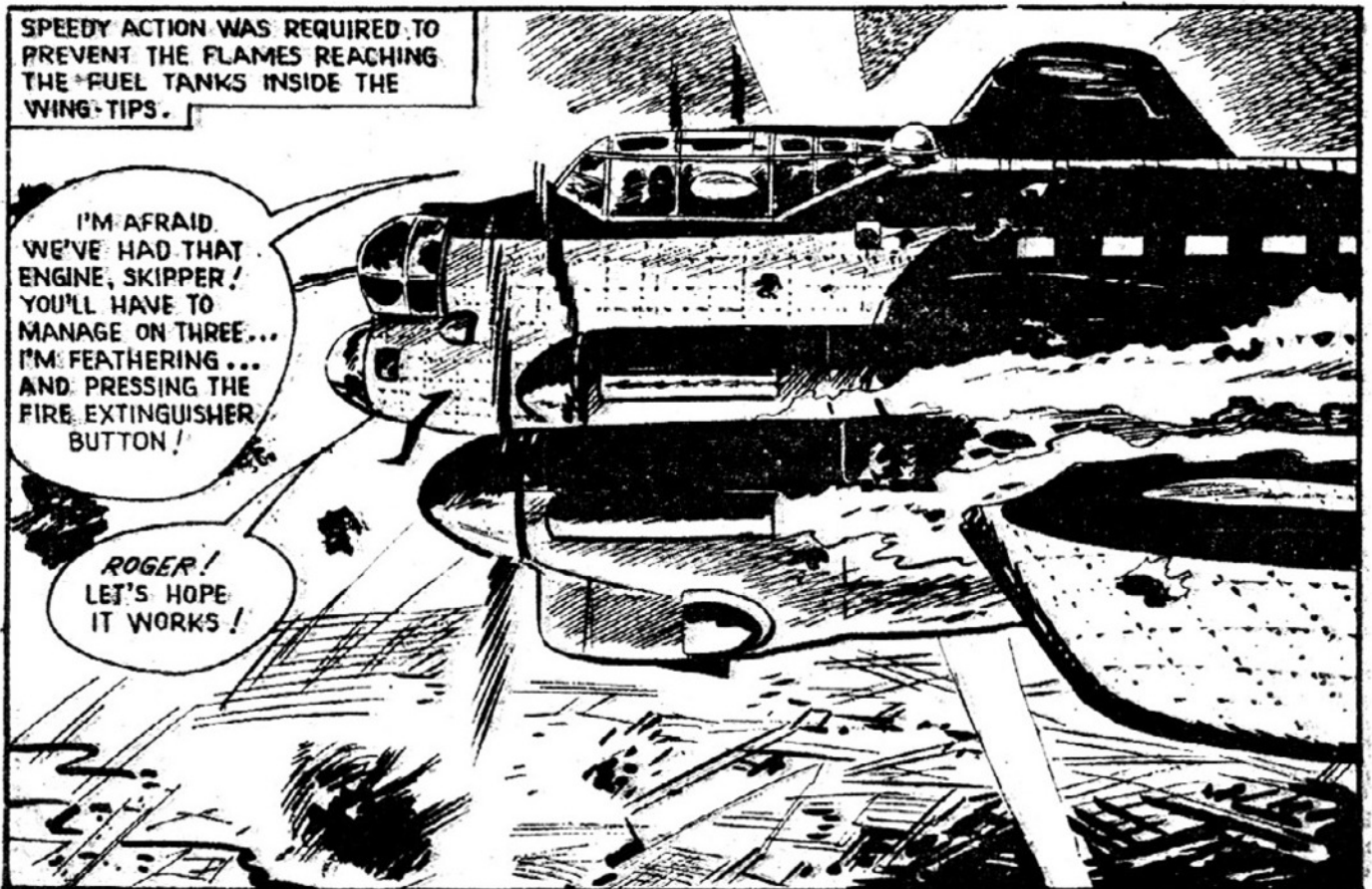
THE PORT OUTER IS OVERHEATING, SIR!

OVERHEATING, MY FOOT! IT'S ON FIRE!

SPEEDY ACTION WAS REQUIRED TO PREVENT THE FLAMES REACHING THE FUEL TANKS INSIDE THE WING-TIPS.

I'M AFRAID WE'VE HAD THAT ENGINE, SKIPPER! YOU'LL HAVE TO MANAGE ON THREE... I'M FEATHERING... AND PRESSING THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER BUTTON!

ROGER! LET'S HOPE IT WORKS!



INEXORABLY THE FLAK AND SEARCHLIGHTS SWUNG ROUND ONCE MORE ON TO THE SOLITARY PLANE ...

THE FLAK IS ON TO US AGAIN, SKIPPER!

CAN'T BE HELPED, REAR-GUNNER!

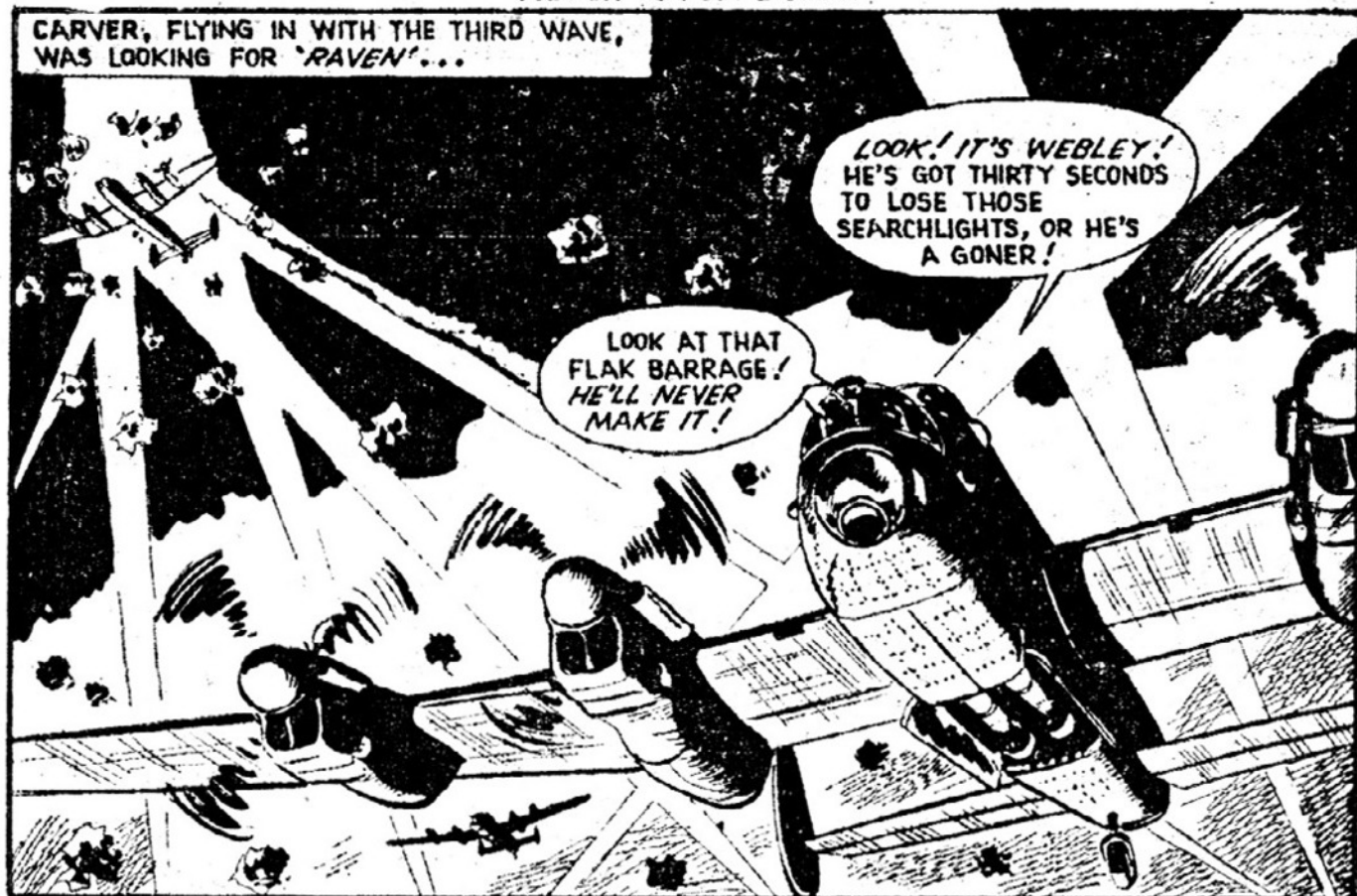
HULLO, ROOKS... THIS IS RAVEN! BRING THE AIMING POINT FORWARD, PATHFINDERS! THE TARGET'S BURNING NICELY... KEEP IT UP!

THE THIRD WAVE OF THE MAIN FORCE WAS MEANWHILE ROARING IN ON ITS RUN-UP...

WE'VE BEEN LISTENING TO THIS RAVEN CHAPPIE ALL THE WAY FROM THE COAST... AND HE'S STILL AT IT! HE MUST HAVE A CHARMED LIFE!

...COME IN, THIRD WAVE OF ROOKS! PATHFINDERS, FOLLOW UP THE RED T.I. WITH A FLARE... THE AIMING POINT IS OBSCURED! THIRD WAVE, BOMB JUST SHORT OF THE NORTH FRINGE OF THE SMOKE CLOUD!

CARVER, FLYING IN WITH THE THIRD WAVE, WAS LOOKING FOR 'RAVEN'...



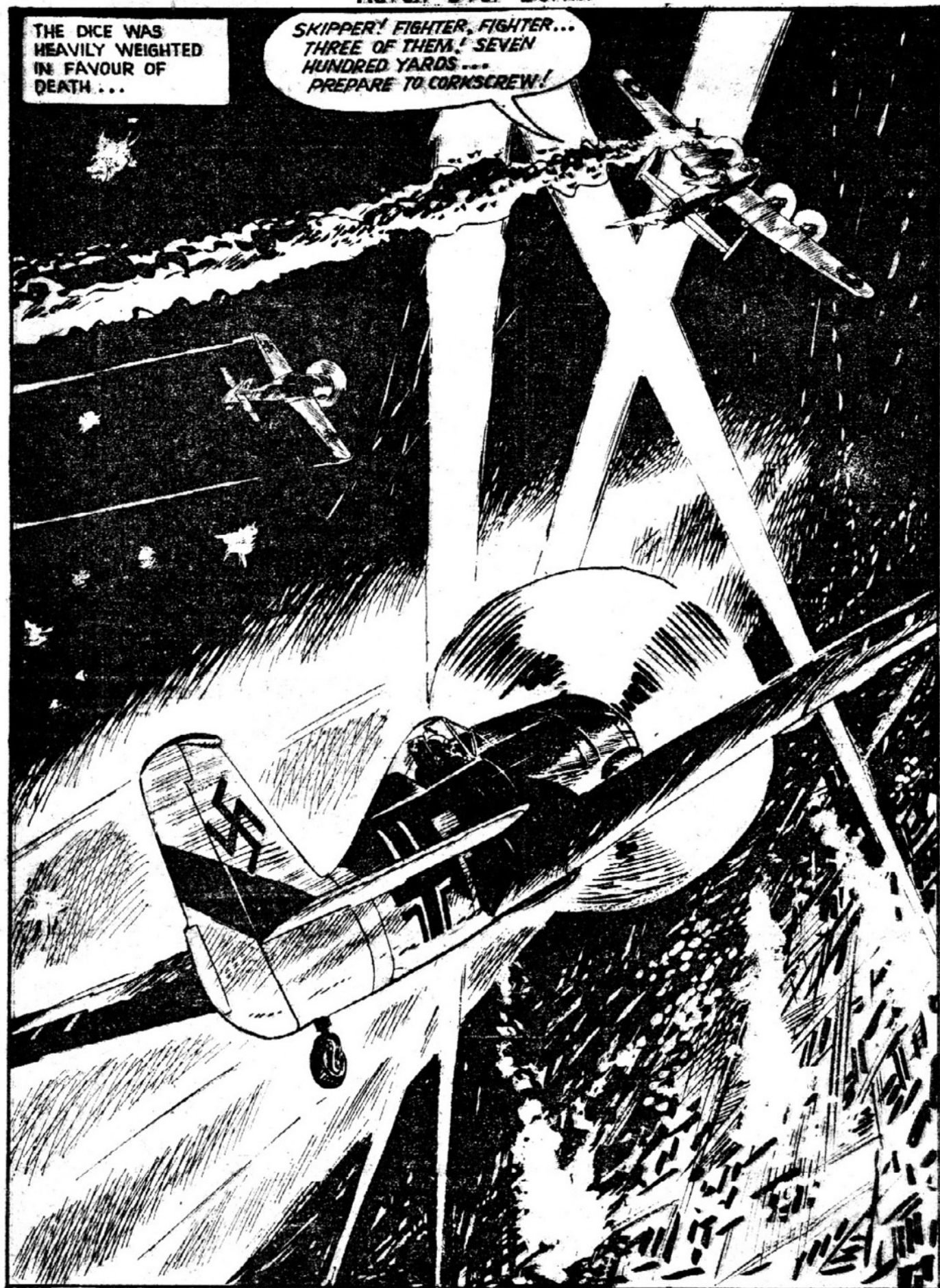
TO PERFORM EVASIVE ACTION WITH A FOUR-ENGINE BOMBER FLYING ON ONLY THREE ENGINES REQUIRES NERVE, SUPERB FLYING, AND MUSCLES OF STEEL. WEBLEY WAS ENDOWED WITH ALL THREE QUALITIES.



Raven Over Berlin

THE DICE WAS
HEAVILY WEIGHTED
IN FAVOUR OF
DEATH...

SKIPPER! FIGHTER, FIGHTER...
THREE OF THEM! SEVEN
HUNDRED YARDS...
PREPARE TO CORNSCREW!



BUT WEBLEY REALISED THAT A SIMPLE CORKSCREW WOULD NOT EVADE THREE FIGHTERS. HE HELD THE MACHINE STEADY UNTIL THE FIRST BURST OF CANNON SHELL WHIPPED BY... AND THEN HE PULLED THE STICK RIGHT BACK...

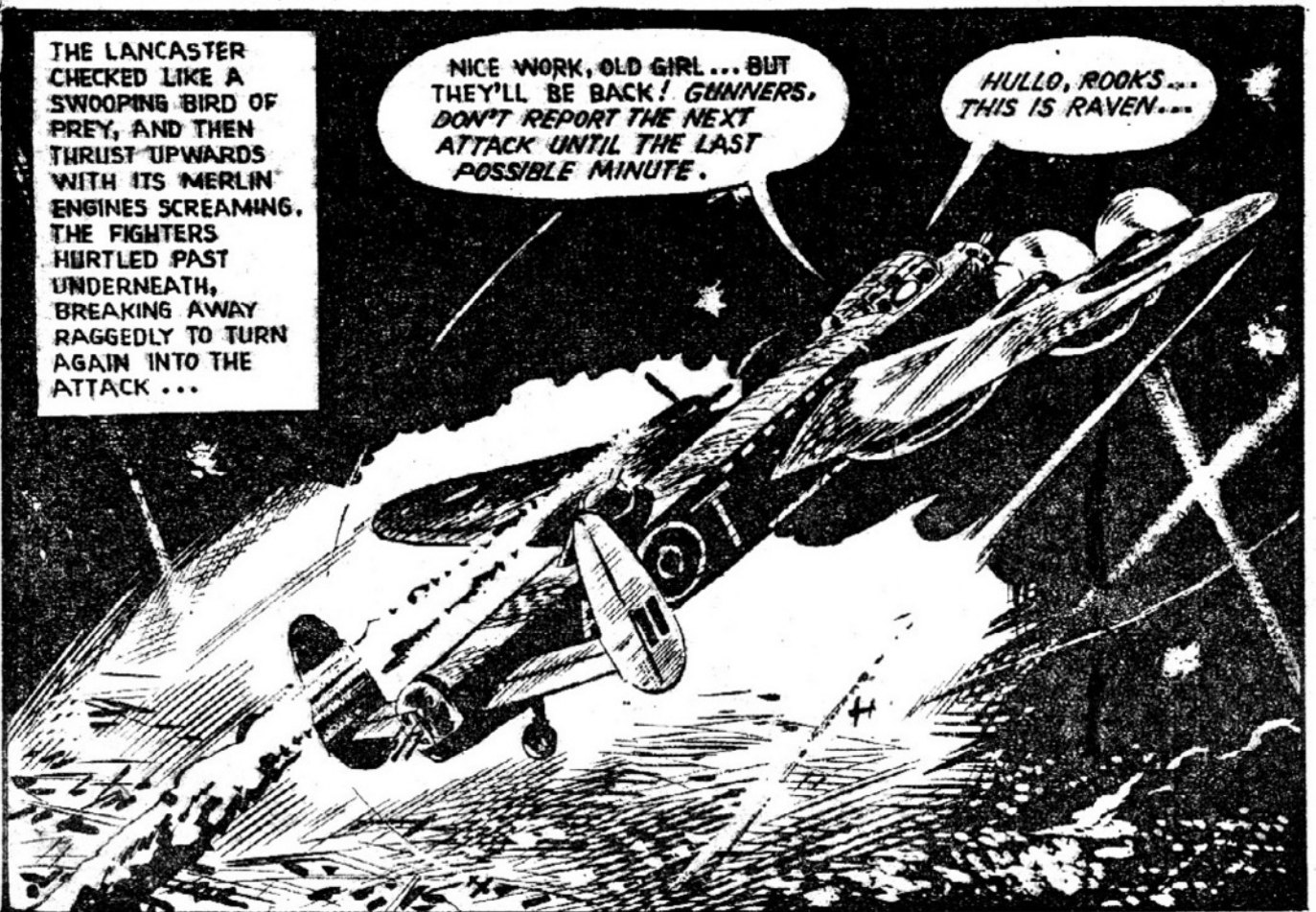
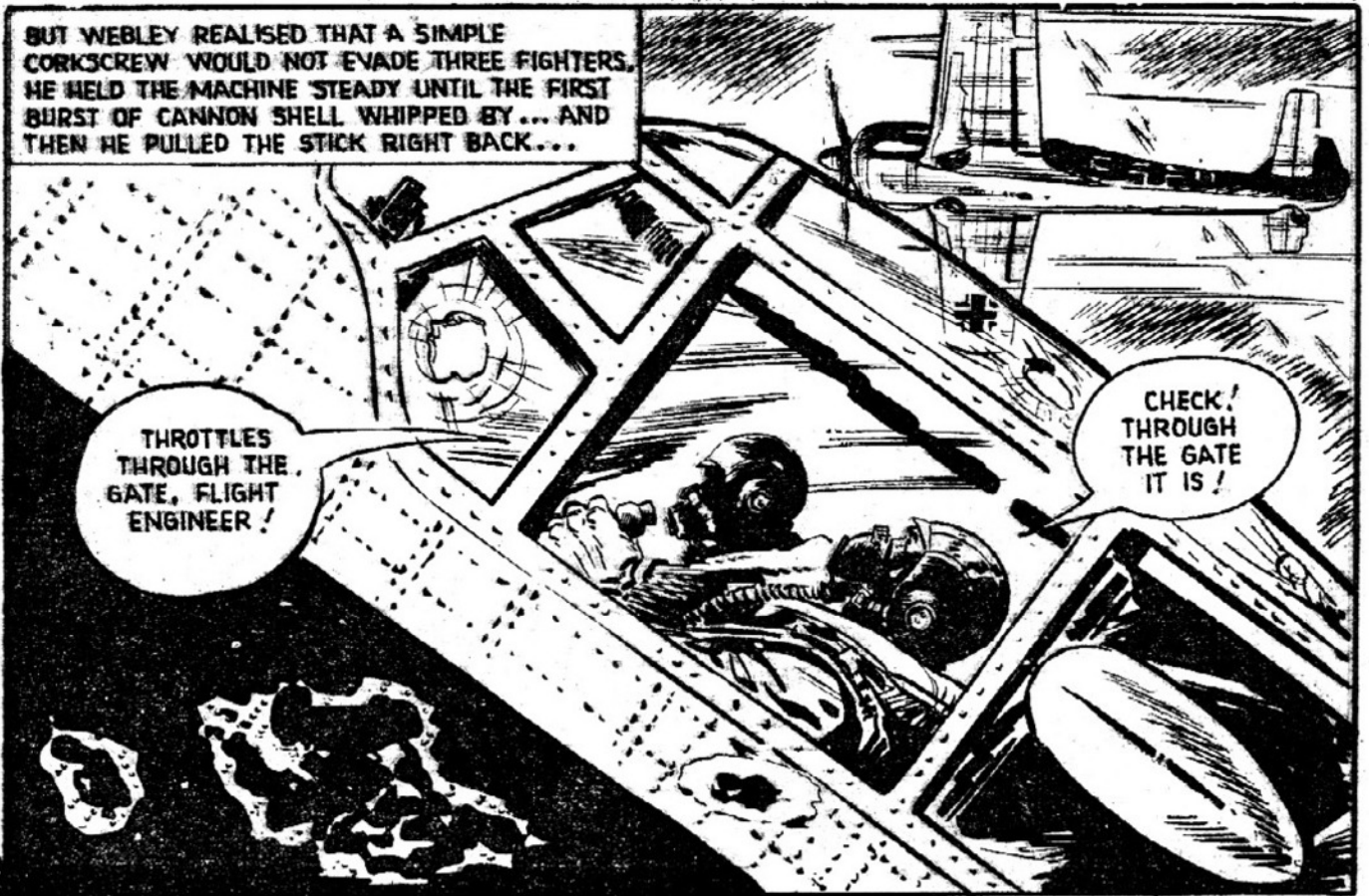
THROTTLES THROUGH THE GATE, FLIGHT ENGINEER!

CHECK! THROUGH THE GATE IT IS!

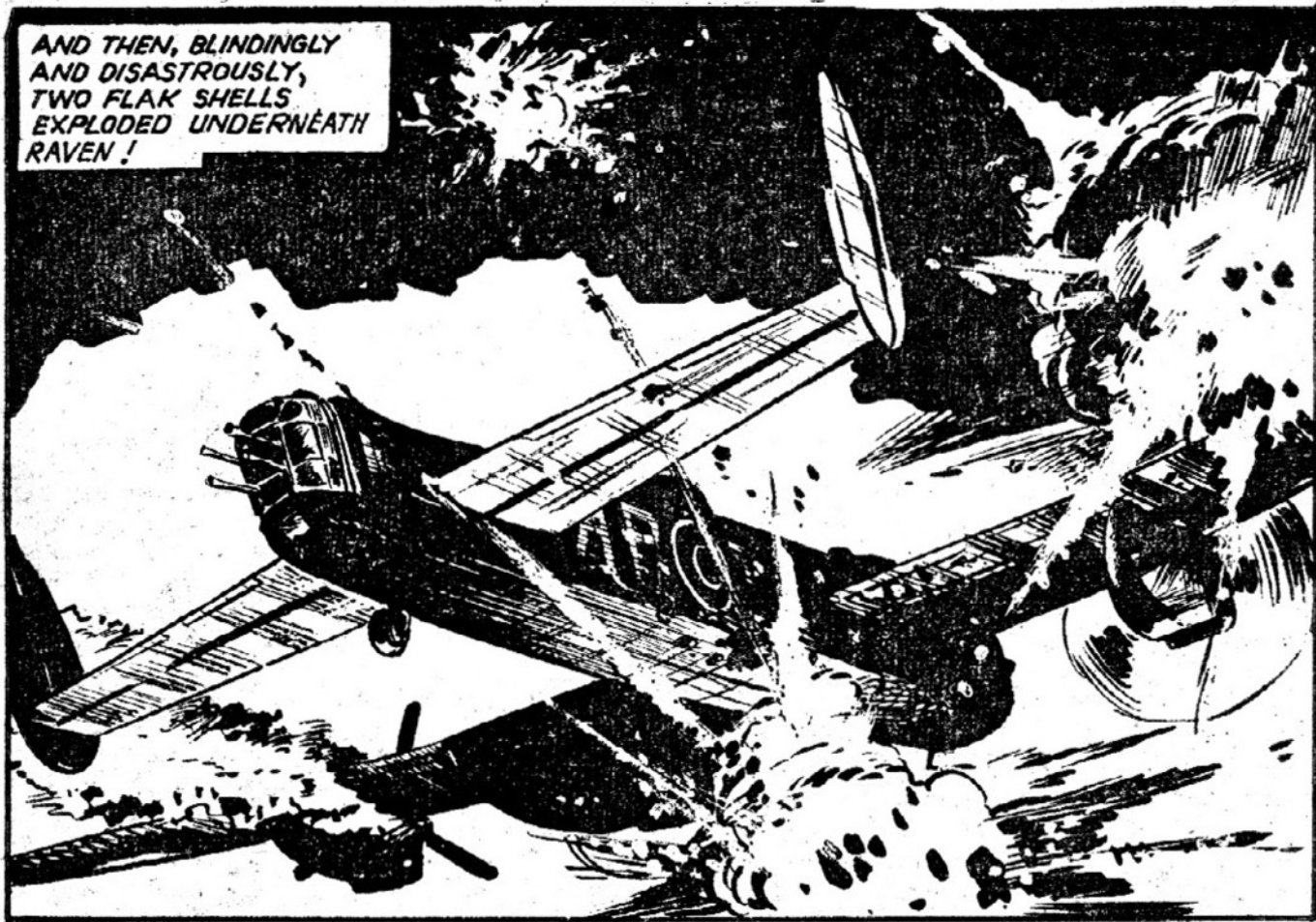
THE LANCASTER CHECKED LIKE A SWOOPING BIRD OF PREY, AND THEN THRUST UPWARDS WITH ITS MERLIN ENGINES SCREAMING. THE FIGHTERS HURTTLED PAST UNDERNEATH, BREAKING AWAY RAGGEDLY TO TURN AGAIN INTO THE ATTACK...

NICE WORK, OLD GIRL... BUT THEY'LL BE BACK! GUNNERS, DON'T REPORT THE NEXT ATTACK UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MINUTE.

HULLO, ROOKS... THIS IS RAVEN...



AND THEN, BLINDINGLY
AND DISASTROUSLY,
TWO FLAK SHELLS
EXPLODED UNDERNEATH
RAVEN!



ACRID CORDITE FUMES SWEEPED THROUGH
THE INTERIOR OF THE LANCASTER AS
WEBLEY FOUGHT FOR CONTROL ...

WIRELESS OF BADLY
HIT, SIR... AND THERE'S
A HOLE IN THE MAIN
SPAR THE SIZE
OF A SOUP
PLATE!

OKAY, ENGINEER, WE'VE
HAD IT! LET'S MAKE A
LAST TRANSMISSION!

HULLO, ROOKS...
RAVEN CALLING!
GOT TO SIGN OFF NOW!
YOUR BOMBS ARE
FALLING SHORT AGAIN!
WAIT FOR IT...
WAIT FOR IT!



IT WAS JUST AT THAT POINT THAT CARVER WAS PULLING AWAY FROM THE TARGET AREA WITH EMPTY BOMB BAYS.

TRUST THAT SILLY BLIGHTER WEBLEY TO CASH IN HIS CHIPS BEFORE THE SHOW IS OVER! WE CAN'T DO WITHOUT RAVEN... NOT NOW! THERE'S ONLY ONE THING FOR IT... SOMEBODY'S GOT TO TAKE HIS PLACE. WELL, FLIGHT ENGINEER, WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

CHECK! FULL REVS AND BOOST COMING UP, SIR! LET'S GET CLIMBING...

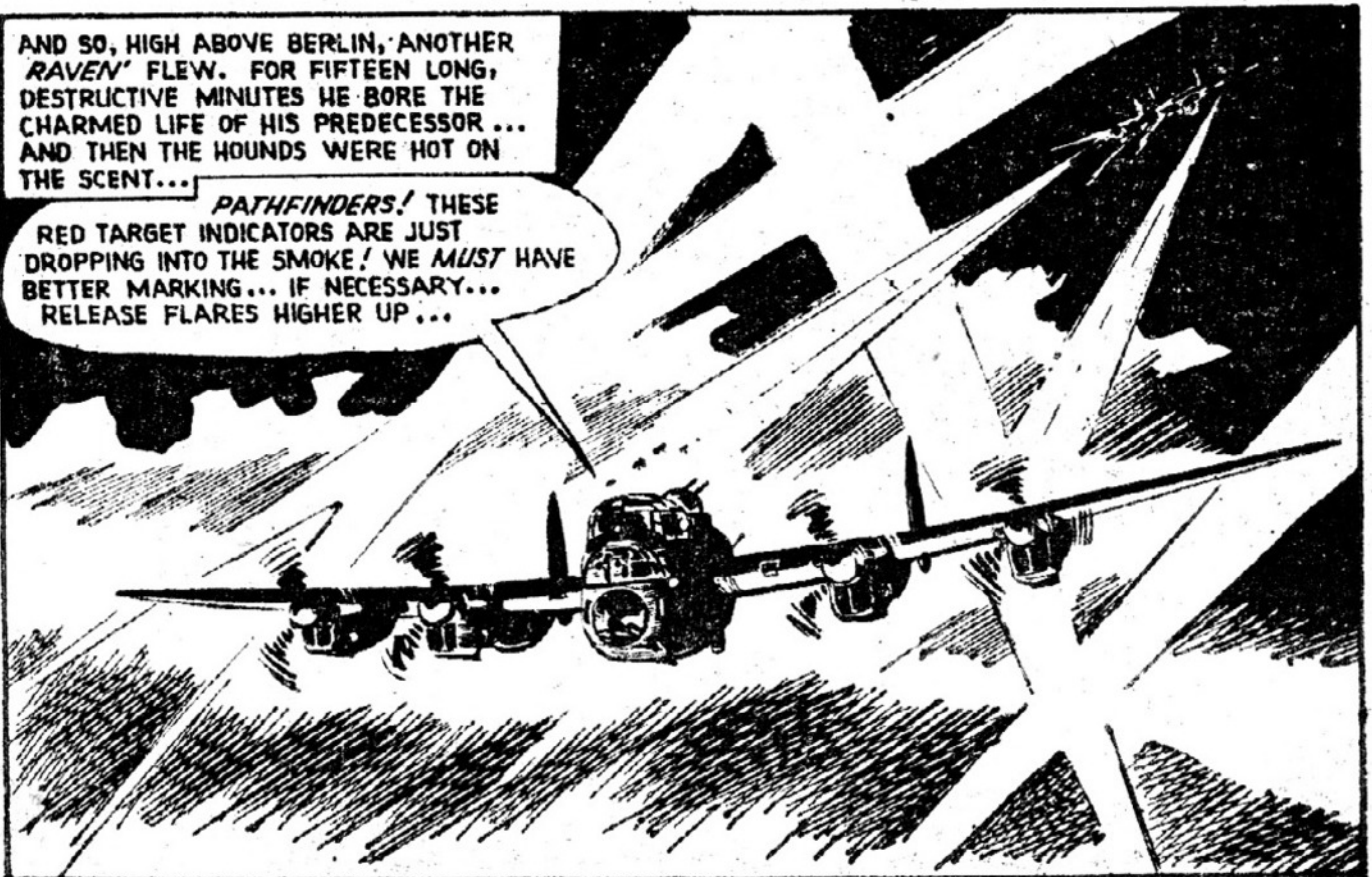
MEANWHILE, WEBLEY WAS NURSING THE BATTERED LANCASTER HOMEWARD, THE CHAOS OF BURNING BERLIN BEHIND HIM. SUDDENLY, THERE WAS A VOICE IN HIS EARPHONES... AND IN THE EARPHONES OF EVERY PILOT OF THE VAST FLEET OF BOMBERS.

HULLO, WEBLEY, WHEREVER YOU ARE... THIS IS CARVER! REPEAT, CARVER! YOU WERE AN INSPIRATION TO ALL THE BOYS, SO I'M PAYING YOU THE BIGGEST COMPLIMENT I CAN... I'M TAKING YOUR PLACE! I HOPE THIS CLEARS THE AIR BETWEEN US... SO GOODBYE! HULLO, ALL ROOKS... THIS IS RAVEN...

GREAT SCOTT, FLIGHT... IT'S CARVER... AND HE'S STANDING IN FOR US!

AND SO, HIGH ABOVE BERLIN, ANOTHER RAVEN FLEW. FOR FIFTEEN LONG, DESTRUCTIVE MINUTES HE BORE THE CHARMED LIFE OF HIS PREDECESSOR... AND THEN THE HOUNDS WERE HOT ON THE SCENT...

PATHFINDERS! THESE RED TARGET INDICATORS ARE JUST DROPPING INTO THE SMOKE! WE MUST HAVE BETTER MARKING... IF NECESSARY... RELEASE FLARES HIGHER UP...



IN AN INSTANT IT WAS OVER. THE GUNNERS MAY HAVE BEEN BLINDED BY THE GLARE OF THE SEARCHLIGHTS AND CARVER'S MIND WAS ON HIS TRANSMISSION — BUT WHY THE GERMAN DID NOT BREAK AWAY WILL NEVER BE KNOWN. THE FIGHTER HURTTLED STRAIGHT INTO THE BOMBER!



AS THE FAINT VOICE OF 'RAVEN' SUDDENLY BROKE OFF, WEBLEY AND HIS ENGINEER LOOKED BRIEFLY AT EACH OTHER, BUT SAID NOTHING. TWO HOURS LATER, HIS FACE GREY WITH FATIGUE, WEBLEY COAXED THE SINKING BOMBER DESPERATELY IN A LAST BID FOR HEIGHT ...

PILOT TO CREW... WE MAY HAVE TO DITCH! SO MAKE READY! HOW'S THE WIRELESS OP?

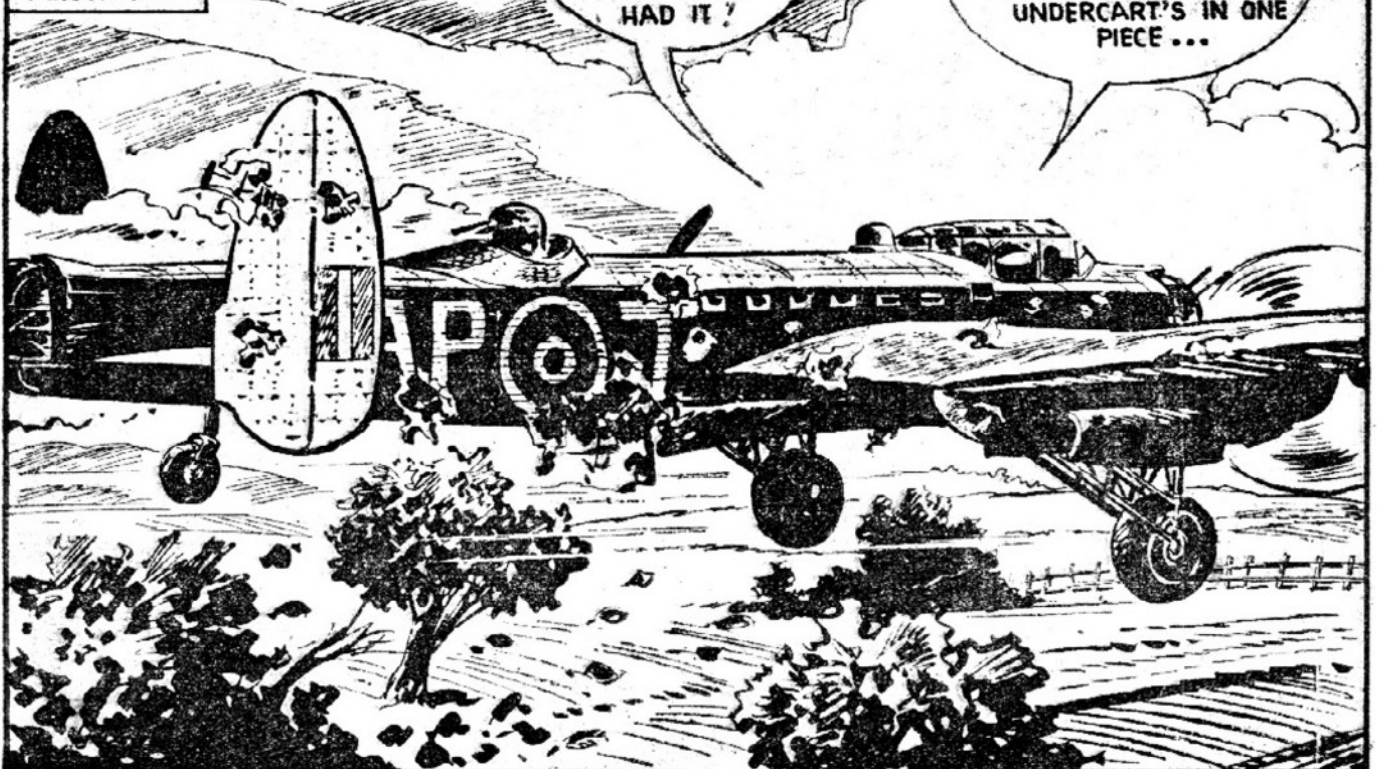
HE'LL BE OKAY, SKIPPER. I'LL GIVE HIM SOME MORPHIA... HE'S ASLEEP...



BUT ON AND ON THEY FLEW... AND THE GAUNT, TATTERED MACHINE WAS LIMPING AT TREETOP HEIGHT AS THEY CAME IN TOWARDS THEIR HOME RUNWAY...

THANK HEAVENS FOR A FLAT COUNTRYSIDE, SKIPPER... IF THIS WAS WALES, WE'D HAVE HAD IT!

NEVER HAD IT SO DICEY, NAVIGATOR... TWO INCHES BACK ON THE STICK, AND SHE'D STALL. LET'S HOPE THE UNDERCART'S IN ONE PIECE...

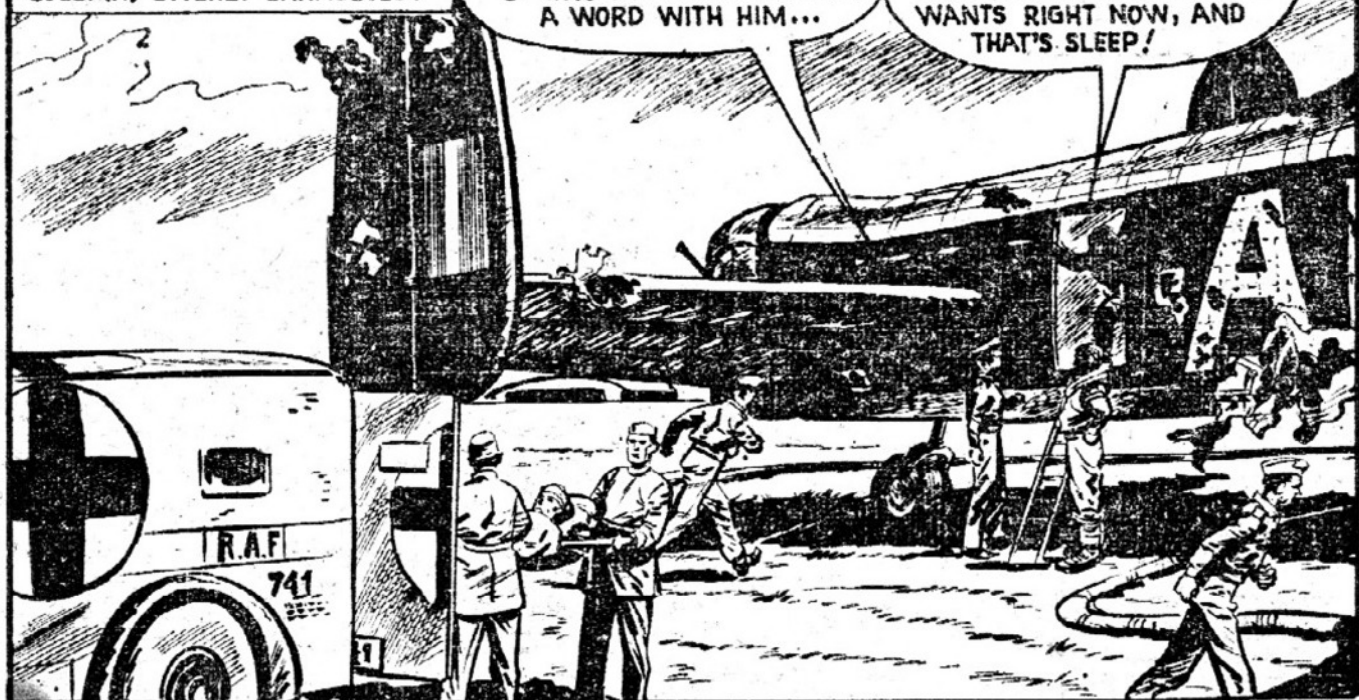


Raven Over Berlin

BUT THE UNDERCARRIAGE HELD... AND AS THE LANCASTER AT LAST ROLLED TO A STANDSTILL ON THE RUNWAY, WEBLEY SLUMPED FORWARD OVER THE CONTROL COLUMN, UTTERLY EXHAUSTED.

WE THOUGHT YOU'D HAD IT! THE SQUADRON ARE ALL FULL OF THE WAY THE OLD MAN HANDLED RAVEN... HE'S THE HERO OF THE HOUR! I'LL GO INTO THE LANC AND HAVE A WORD WITH HIM...

IF I WERE YOU, SIR, I'D LEAVE HIM WHERE HE IS FOR A WHILE! HE'S CARRIED THIS BUS ALL THE WAY FROM BERLIN ON THREE ENGINES AND HIS WITS... AND THERE'S ONLY ONE THING HE WANTS RIGHT NOW, AND THAT'S SLEEP!



AND SO ENDED 'RAVEN'... AND WITH IT THE ENMITY OF TWO MEN, ONE WHO DIED, AND THE OTHER WHO LIVED TO FLY AGAIN. AIR VICE-MARSHAL USHER VISITED THE SQUADRON AND FOUND WEBLEY MOST DETERMINED IN MIND...

WEBLEY...WE NEED MEN LIKE YOU AT AIR MINISTRY... WE'RE DOING REMARKABLE THINGS IN THE BOMBING RESEARCH UNIT NOW, YOU KNOW...

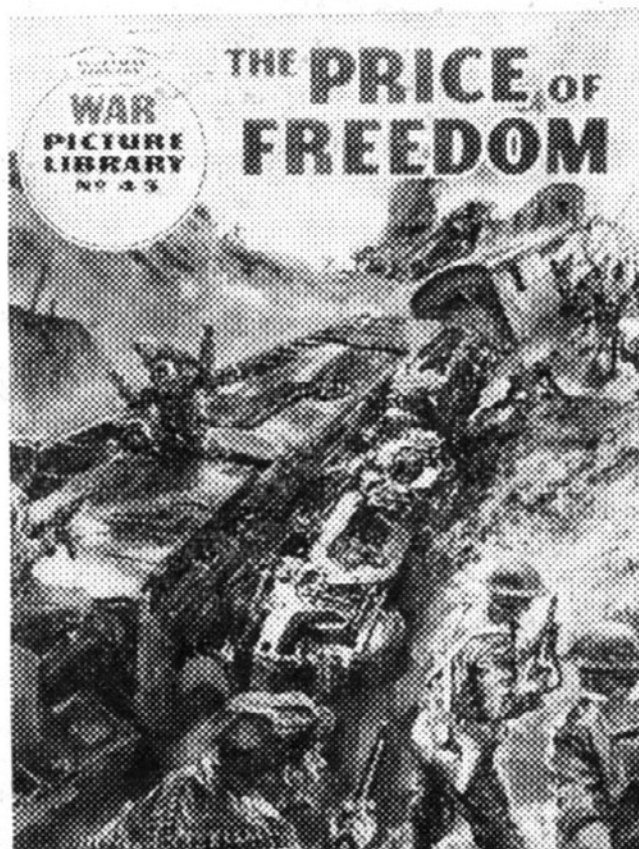
FLYING IS MY LIFE, SIR! SO LET'S CHANGE THE SUBJECT... IN FACT WHY NOT COME FOR A LITTLE TRIP WITH ME IN MY NEW LANC? AFTER THAT, YOU'LL PROBABLY WANT TO GO ON OPERATIONS YOURSELF...



ALSO ON SALE NOW
FOR WAR THRILLS . . . ACTION . . . DRAMA . . .

WAR PICTURE LIBRARY

No. 45—THE PRICE OF FREEDOM No. 47—THE GREEN HELL



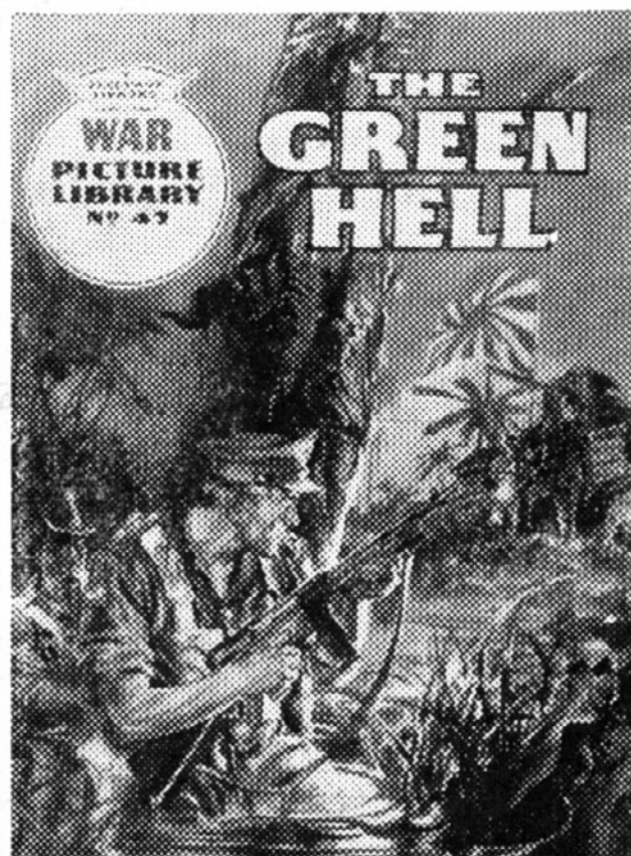
There was only one man who could save the Allied spearhead from the ambush in its path. But what happens when that man is yesterday's enemy—how far can you trust him?

ALSO ON SALE NOW :—

No. 46—OPERATION FURY

Next month's **FOUR** thrilling **WAR PICTURE LIBRARY** titles on sale May 2nd, are :—

No. 48—COLD STEEL
No. 49—BROKEN WINGS



In the eerie twilight of the jungle, the English soldiers were helpless. With nothing but courage they blundered on, desperately needing, yet rejecting, the guidance of the experienced hunter.

No. 50—THE CRIMSON SEA
No. 51—DESTINATION ALAMEIN

ACTION . . . IN THE FLAK-TORN SKIES!

AIR ACE PICTURE LIBRARY



BRINGING YOU
IN SUPERB
PICTURES THE
BEST OF THE
AIR BATTLES!



TWO GREAT
THRILLERS OF
WAR IN THE
SKIES EVERY
MONTH!

No. 7—SEEK AND STRIKE.

No. 8—HURRIBOMBERS.

AIR ACE PICTURE LIBRARY

BOTH ISSUES ON SALE THURSDAY, APRIL 14th.

MAKE SURE—ASK FOR THEM NOW!